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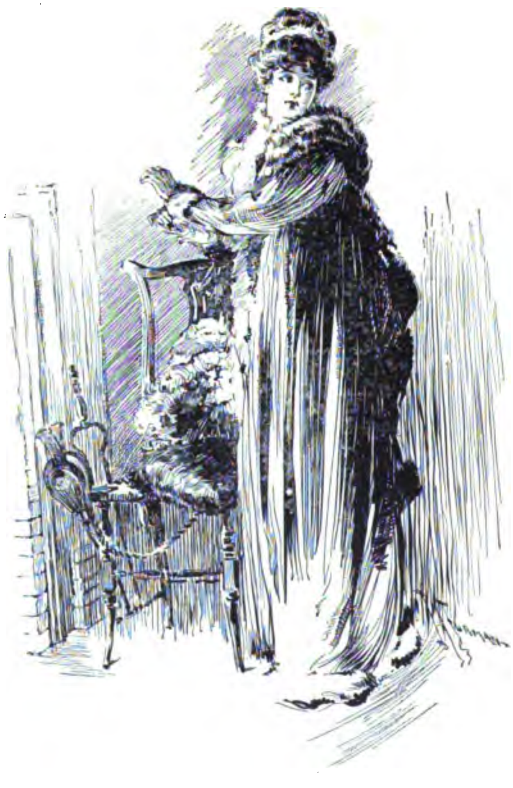

The most enchanting little figure I have
ever looked upon

MISS LIVINGSTON'S COMPANION

A LOVE STORY OF OLD NEW YORK

BY

C. Johnson)

MARY DILLON

Author of "The Rose of Old St. Louis,"
"In Old Bellaire," etc., etc.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
E. A. FURMAN

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TO

M. D. C. AND L. R. C.

WHOSE LOVE AND DEVOTION
MAKE ALL MY DAYS A SONG

WOR 19FEB'36

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MISS LIVINGSTON'S COMPANION

MISS LIVINGSTON'S COMPANION

I

WHERE THE GENTLE AVON FLOWS

I HAD been sad enough when I said good-by to my father on the dock at Greenwich. This voyage to America was none of my seeking, and I verily believed, as I watched the green shores slipping away on either side and my father's erect figure, crowned by the fine head of iron-gray curls (all his own, for he scorned to wear a peruke) growing dim in the distance, I verily believed I was leaving my heart behind me in green and merry England; and the prospect of the two years before me was as dull and colorless as the leaden skies settling like a pall over the city and breaking into thin wreaths of mist around Sir Christopher's distant dome.

But my sadness was not entirely for leaving my father. I loved my father, and, though he could be stern enough on occasion, we had been good comrades with more interests in common than most fathers and sons of my acquaintance. I had not disgraced him at his old college in Oxford; of my prowess in cricket and at the oars he had been justly proud; I had passed my Smalls and my Mods with credit and had even thought of going in for a First at the Greats, much to his delight. But my father and I were at outs just now, on a very vital point, and there was no longer freedom and good-fellowship to be found in our intercourse — nothing but a miserable constraint that we both felt only time and distance could remove. For it was there in Oxford, walking down the High, that I had first seen Peggy Wolverton; and to have seen her was to have the whole world change in the twinkling of an eye. What were fathers, or tutors, or reading, or going in for Schools, or even training on the Isis, or bowling in Christ Church Meadows, compared with the bliss of sitting in the Sheldonian and watching Peggy play Lady Teazle, and catching a smile from her scarlet lips and a glance from her sparkling eyes meant for me alone.

For two blissful weeks my tutor knew me not, and even my beautiful chambers in Merton, the most perfect example of the Elizabethan in Oxford, which had been my father's before me, seldom saw me. I did spend an hour or two of the night in them in restless slumber and blissful dreams, and at least three times a day I paid them a flying visit to see that my hair was brushed and tied anew, that face and hands were immaculate; in short, that I was in such fresh and splendid array as befitted the presentation of myself before my goddess. For when I was not sitting in the play or hanging around the stage door, I was treading on air as I walked beside the divine Peggy from the theater to The Roebuck; or I was spending my quarter's allowance and mortgaging my next one on late suppers, where I pledged Peggy's health in old Morley's choicest Madeira; or I was blissfully strolling with her down Addison's Walk or through the Meadows; or still more blissfully punting her lazily up the Cher; or most blissfully of all, sitting beside her in her untidy room at the Roebuck, holding her little hand and looking ardently into her bright eyes.

I thought then that they looked love into mine in return; I 'm not quite so sure of it now. It may be that it pleased Peggy to have a good-looking young baronet — I do not think my glass deceived me as to the good looks, nor that I was unduly vain to credit myself with a modicum of them — it may be that it pleased her to have this young dandy, this scion of one of the oldest and richest baronies of England, dangling at her heels; and no doubt she was more willing to accept the title *in futuro* of Lady Marchmont, which, in my lordly way, but trembling also with eagerness and youthful bliss, I assured her should be hers as soon as I could get my father's consent; or, failing that, should be hers without it as soon as I came of age.

I had always been proud of my title, a baronet in my own right through my mother. I could not remember the day when the servants had not called me "the little Sir Lionel." Now there may be many little "Lords" in England, but there are not many young men that can be called "Sir" while their fathers are still living. "And please God," I often said to myself, "may it be a long day before I change 'Sir Lionel' to 'Lord Marchmont,' for no young man in England could have a better father than mine." And so Peggy, no doubt, was clever enough to know that with or without my father's consent she could be Lady Marchmont some day.

Whether the fates were unkind or otherwise, Peggy's engagement in Oxford lasted but two weeks, and though the company went no farther than Stratford for their next stop it seemed to me that the whole wide world lay between me and Peggy, and I lived only for the end of the week when the old coach made one of its tri-weekly trips to Stratford Saturday afternoon, returning Monday morning. I lived only for these Sundays spent with Peggy, floating on the Avon as we had floated on the Cher, and pouring out my soul to her in the sonnets Mr. Shakespeare had written on that very spot. I think I spent most of my hours between Monday noon and Saturday noon in conning his verses to have them at my tongue's end by Sunday, for I did not doubt in my heart that that mysterious love of his, to whom the sonnets were written, was Peggy's very counterpart: her "mourning eyes," her "black-arched brows," her "scarlet lips," were Peggy's own.

I have always suspected my tutor of giving my father a hint of how matters were progressing with me, for into this beautiful spring idyl my father walked unannounced one day, greatly to my consternation. It was Saturday morning and I had ordered a cold and early luncheon in my rooms and was making an elaborate toilet in Peggy's honor, hurrying, lest by some mischance I should be late for the start from the Mitre. I knew that with the first stroke of Great Tom on the noon hour, Gleason's long lash would curl and snap round the ears of his leaders and the four big bays would roll the heavy coach lightly over the stones of the High and I would miss my chance of spending Sunday with Peggy if I were not in my accustomed seat by Gleason on the box.

I could never have believed that the sight of my father could give me so little pleasure. I tried to think, while I was shaking hands with him, in an embarrassed and half-hearted way, I fear, what excuse I could make for running off from him immediately; for the thought of disappointing Peggy who, I had no doubt, was ardently and impatiently expecting my arrival in Stratford, did not occur to me for a moment. But I soon made up my mind that the only honest way was, as the American philosopher says, also the best policy: I must make a clean breast of it to my father, for he was much too shrewd a man to be deceived by any halting excuses, even if I had been willing to make the attempt. On the whole it would be rather a relief to have it over, for the confession was bound to come some time, and the sooner it was made the sooner I could hope to claim Peggy — my father's consent being a necessary preliminary. Therefore, while mentally anathematizing old Hardwick, to whom I was sure I was indebted for this visit, I plunged boldly in.

"I am very glad to see you, sir," I said, inwardly quavering but outwardly bold, "though I could have wished I might have known of your coming in time to put off an important engagement in Stratford which compels my leaving on the noon coach."

"An engagement in Stratford!" exclaimed my father, in real or pretended astonishment. "Pray, what business takes you to Stratford, my boy?"

"I have promised, sir, to spend Sunday there with Miss Wolverton," I answered steadily enough, though feeling the red flood rushing to my temples.

"Miss Wolverton! Not Peggy Wolverton, the actress?" And then answering his own question before I had time to reply: "No, of course not! The divine Peggy is nearer my age than yours. You were just getting into your first small clothes when Peggy was setting the town ablaze with her beauty and her wit."

Now I had, at times, a faint suspicion that Peggy might be a year or two older than I (which I said to myself, stoutly, mattered not at all in love), but that there could be any such difference in age as my father intimated I knew to be impossible. Either my father was exaggerating the matter for his own purposes, or my Peggy must be the other Peggy's daughter. But as I had not liked my father's familiar way of speaking of her, and liked still less his uncomfortable suggestion, I answered stiffly:

"Doubtless, sir, 't is another Miss Wolverton."

"Oh, doubtless," agreed my father. "But what have we here, Lionel? Is this the remains of breakfast or the beginnings of luncheon?"

Whereupon I pressed my father to partake of my cold mutton and sent my scout for another tankard of ale, and, being by now fully dressed, I joined him at the table and began to feel more at ease as I busied myself with the duties of hospitality. I was proceeding to explain to him that I should be back on the return coach Monday morning, that I hoped he would occupy his old rooms while I was gone, and that no doubt among the dons he would find some old acquaintances to make the Sabbath hours pass pleasantly, when my father interrupted me:

"That 's all very well, but I came to see you, sir, and since you seem to think it impossible to postpone your visit to Stratford, how would you like to have me go with you?"

Now I would like it not at all, and for the moment I was inclined to give up my visit to Peggy and stay at home with my father, as I well knew it was my duty to do. My father saw my hesitation and added with a twinkle in his eye, as if he well understood the cause of it:

"I can visit Mr. Shakespeare's tomb, I suppose, or hold discreet converse with mine host of the Red Horse while you go boating on the Avon with Miss Wolverton. And we will have the journey over and the journey back in which to discuss some weighty matters, for the consideration of which I am come to Oxford."

The kindly twinkle reassured me and I hastened to declare myself delighted with the prospect of having him for a fellow traveler, but that I was ready, also, to give up my proposed jaunt if he preferred it. He would not hear to that and having by this time disposed of our mutton we hurried over to the Mitre to learn if there might be, by chance, a vacant place on the coach for my father. By great good luck there were two, given up not an hour before, the landlord of the Mitre said, and, though I did not suspect it at the time, I have wondered since if Hardwick had not had them reserved by prearrangement with my father. Of course I gave up my box seat with Gleason and sat by my father, and for the first half of the way, while we were rolling at a pretty pace over the beautiful Oxfordshire and Warwickshire roads, the hawthorn hedges all abloom, the poppies beginning to show gleams of scarlet among the young corn, the birds singing in the leafy lanes and my heart beating fast, half with joy at the thought of seeing Peggy and half with fear at the remembrance that the weightier part of my confession was still unmade — that I had not yet told my father that I wished to marry Peggy — for the first half, as I said, my father made no mention of the matters he had come all the way from Devonshire to discuss with me.

We followed the windings of the silvery Cher as far as Banbury, where we descended from the coach, while the horses were changing, and made a hasty supper at the old Red Lion, principally on the cakes and ale for which Banbury is famous. The shadows were lengthening as we climbed into our places once more, and as we left the Cher at the cross roads where the old cross used to stand — so Gleason once told me and I now told my father — and as we plunged into the cool and shadowy glens of Edge Hill Mountains, my father cleared his throat in an ominous fashion and I knew my time was come.

"My son," he began, "war has been declared, and the Lightfoot Greys are ordered to Portsmouth."

My heart was in my mouth in an instant.

"War declared!" I cried, and "Ordered to Portsmouth!"—all in the same breath. I hardly knew which was the greater news. "We had not heard, sir, in Oxford," I added with a guilty feeling that I had been so absorbed in Peggy I had only half read my *Times* of late, and had like to clean forgot that war was pending.

"I fancy that there are some in Oxford better posted than you," my father answered soberly, "or, perhaps, more deeply interested in the affairs of their country. But it is not, as yet, a matter of general information. The *Times* will have it on Monday, but I have had my early news from your uncle, the duke."

"Then I am not to stay for the Greats, I suppose, sir, nor Commem.?" I asked, trembling with an excitement that would have been all pure joy if it had not been for Peggy. For the duke had promised me a captain's commission in the Lightfoot Greys, which formed part of his own command, and to be ordered to Portsmouth meant, of course, to be ordered on shipboard also, and off to the seat of war, wherever that might be. It would have been all pure joy, as I said, but — what was to become of Peggy? Therefore my father's next words gave me a momentary relief.

"No, the duke insists you must go up for the Passes and take your three taps. That is my desire also. We both wish to see you a full-fledged B.A."

"But, sir," I stammered, being equally divided in my mind between relief and disappointment, "will not the Lightfoot Greys have sailed by that time?"

My father cleared his throat once more.

"The duke also thinks, and here I agree with him again, that you are too young to hold a captain's commission in war times. He says the late war lasted fifteen years and this is like to be as long — there will be plenty of time for you to win your spurs later and plenty of captain's places to be filled from those left vacant by the fortunes of war."

My father seemed to expect me to interrupt him here, and he hurried on, either to give me no chance or because he knew that what he was about to say would be especially distasteful to me.

"We have both decided, in family council, that the thing you need is two years in a foreign land, where you may learn to rely on yourself, and where you may find opportunities for adventure that will prove the best preparation for a soldier's life. The duke, therefore, has given me letters for you to his friend Mr. Livingston of New York and the Hudson. With such an introduction you will see the best of the New World society and I have particularly asked Mr. Livingston, also, to throw any chances for adventure in your way that may seem desirable."

"*Have* asked him!" I exclaimed quickly. "Then you have already written him?" For his use of the past tense had struck painfully on my ears. Were the arrangements all made, the articles signed and sealed without so much as consulting me? Was I not to be permitted to decline this offer of a trip to America, if I so desired?

"Yes 'have,'" said my father dryly. "The letters to Mr. Livingston went on the last packet, a week ago."

I was silent so long that my father began to feel some compunctions, I think. He could not know, of course, that it was of Peggy I was thinking; that I was trying to screw my courage up to complete my confession, and that I was resolving that if I could take Peggy with me to America I would go, but otherwise, not a step.

"Does the plan displease you?" my father asked more gently. "We thought it best that you should sail as soon after Commemoration as possible, since war is threatening and there is no knowing how soon the highway of the sea will be blocked to all traffic. We had no time, therefore, to consult you if our letters were to catch the first packet out, and it was necessary they should if we were to have an answer before time for you to start."

It was now my turn. I began firmly:

"You have asked me, sir, whether the plan displeases me. It is, of course, a very great disappointment not to receive the captain's commission I had so long counted upon, and, naturally, the disappointment is so much the greater since there is a prospect of seeing actual war. But that is a matter for my uncle to decide — the commission is his to give or to withhold. I do not think, sir, that it is a matter which belongs to him to decide whether or not I shall be exiled to America for two years. Indeed, sir, it is a matter on which I think I should have been first consulted, and I still hope that the arrangements have not gone so far that I may yet decline the honor intended me."

"The arrangements are completed," said my father sternly. "You sail the last of July. Remember, sir, it is still two years till you are your own master."

I was appalled at my father's harshness — I had never before encountered it. But it angered me also. We occupied the two seats in the rear entirely to ourselves and by using common caution we need not be overheard by our fellow-travelers in the discussion of matters so extremely private and personal as ours had been. But in my anger I threw caution to the winds.

"I have some rights, sir, if I am not of age!" I exclaimed bitterly. "And, moreover, I am under a solemn engagement to marry a most charming and estimable young woman. I cannot go to America."

My raised voice caught the attention of two or three in front and they turned to look at me. I hardly think they understood my words, but their turning back brought me to my senses and I added in lower tones and with a more submissive air:

"I hope, sir, you will not insist."

My father lowered his voice also.

"Engaged to be married, Lionel, my boy?" he asked in his old kindly tones. "Tell me all about it. That may put a new face on the matter. Is it to Miss Dufour?"

I was softened by my father's words and his return to his old manner, but I liked not the mention of Miss Dufour. It had been a cherished plan of the family that Rosamond Dufour and I should marry when we came of suitable age. Our estates adjoined and our parents had been friends in their youth; but Rosamond had been orphaned when she was so young that I had only hazy remembrances of my childhood's playmate. She had been sent to a convent on the Loire and afterwards to stay with some of her grand French relations and be polished and finished in the society of the gay capital. It was ten years since I had seen her and my most distinct memory of her was of a freckled face making me a saucy moue, and then long arms and legs going like a windmill and red curls floating on the breeze as she flew from me, scaling the high wall that separated the gardens at Clover Combe Court from the park and sitting perched on the top for a moment like a saucy squirrel, kicking her little heels and grinning wickedly; and then, as I started to climb after her, dropping to the other side of the wall and away through the park like the wind. She was only seven and I was nine, and I hated to be beaten at running and climbing by a girl. But I hated more to lose my playmate and so I stood on the wall and called after her angrily:

"Rosamond Defour, you are a naughty girl! If you don't come back, I 'll never speak to you again!"

But she did not stop, nor turn, and as I saw her fast disappearing among the Clover Combe beeches I called again, but this time entreatingly:

"Rosie, Rosie, come back! and you can play with my long bow." For it was because I would not let her have my most precious possession, the bow which my uncle the duke had given me, that she had called me "mean" and made a face at me and then run away from the anger she saw she had aroused.

I had not seen her since, for she set out for Paris the next day, and I remember feeling as my father spoke, a fleeting wonder as to the kind of looking young lady she had grown to be, but proudly sure that her freckled face and red hair could never compare with the raven-black curls and flashing dark eyes and rosy cheeks of my Peggy. It took scarcely a moment for that wonder to flit through my mind, and I answered my father with no apparent hesitation:

"No, sir, it is not Miss Dufour; it is Miss Wolverton."

"Miss Wolverton!" exclaimed my father angrily, and then, as if he had determined to be patient with me, he went on more gently: "I hope you have not been over-hasty, Lionel. Marriage is a grave matter, requiring much deliberation, and surely it is one on which it is fitting you should take council with your father before pledging yourself."

I knew that well, and his grave and kindly tone went farther towards making me feel shame that I had not done so than all his sternness could.

The new moon, a slender crescent of silver, was hanging over the shoulder of Edge Hill, and just below, the great evening star was throbbing. The sun was not yet down, but the high hill shut off the rosy glow in the west and so left moon and star — the star of love, the star of Venus, *our* star, I called it — hanging suspended over the dark brow of the hill in almost undimmed brilliance. I often think of them as they looked that evening, sinking at last behind the high, hanging wood, and the air growing cooler and fresher and drenched with dew, before my father had ceased to plead with his wayward boy. We had long left the sparkling Cher and were rolling swiftly along the banks of the gentle Avon and rapidly nearing Stratford by the time I had given my promise to him: I would see Peggy and tell her that we must wait two years, and that the two years were to be spent by me in exile in America — I called it exile — but if at the end of the two years we both remained constant, my father would withdraw all opposition and Peggy should be Lady Marchmont, and I would be the happiest man in the world.

It was nine o'clock and the sun just setting as we clattered into the stone paved court of the Red Horse; Gleason popping his long whip, the post boy playing fol de rols on his horn, and mine host, a jolly good fellow, rushing out at the door to welcome his coming guests. The inn was full, my father would have to share the room reserved for me, which was another trial, for would he not know exactly how late I stayed out with Peggy? My father made light of it as if he were the one being discommoded.

"Pooh, pooh! that 's nothing! I have often endured greater hardships than to sleep near my boy," he said grandiloquently. "You have two beds in the room, I suppose, Landlord? And, if not, you can easily set up another. Just let us have some supper and I 'll to bed, for I 've traveled farther than this young fellow, to-day, who I 'll be bound is still good for a midnight stroll under the stars."

This last with a sly wink at me, and I blushed sheepishly and could not find it in my heart to propose that I should seek a bed in another inn, as I had thought of doing.

Neither could I find it in my heart to say a word to Peggy of my promise to my father, when I met her at the door of Guild Hall, and we strolled down by the Avon under the stars, and then up on Sir Hugh's great bridge, where we leaned on the parapet looking down into the dark water glimmering faintly below in the starlight; and with my arm around Peggy's waist, and sometimes her head upon my shoulder, I listened to her gay chatter reciting all the trials and triumphs of the week.

But Peggy was hungry, as Peggy always was after the play, and we did not linger long on the bridge. We went back to her inn, the Old Green Tree, not near so fine as the Red Horse, but better suited in price to Peggy's purse, where I ordered the most sumptuous supper the inn could afford; and we lingered so long over it that the great constellation of Scorpio was far on its way to the west, its red heart, Antares, glowering at me just over the roof of the Red Horse, when I presented myself to the sleepy waiter on guard at the door.

I know not how my father managed it — indeed, at the time, I did not think of him as managing it at all, but I 'm sure now that he did — but I saw no more of Peggy alone. He insisted in the morning that I should attend church with him at Holy Trinity (to which I made the fewer objections since I knew Peggy was never visible till mid-day), and where we had a seat near enough to Mr. Shakespeare's grave for me to amuse myself in deciphering the quaint inscription when I wearied of the sermon.

To my consternation, when church was ended and we were lingering under the trees in the pleasant churchyard, watching the Avon slide smoothly by under its overhanging willows, my father proposed that we should call upon Miss Wolverton at her inn and invite her to dinner with us at the Red Horse. To my consternation, I said, for I had been planning how I was to excuse myself to my father and slip away to dine with Peggy, and was just on the point of putting my plan into execution when he spoke. Yet I was as much pleased as dismayed. Did not this prove a desire on my father's part to show honor to Peggy? Would he not treat thus a prospective daughter-in-law who pleased him? Could he do more for Miss Dufour herself, were she in Peggy's place?

I wished now that I had told Peggy, the evening before, of my father's presence in Stratford, that she might have been prepared for this visit. I know not what had tied my tongue each time I had started to tell her, and now I had to confess to my father that she did not know, and would be much taken by surprise.

"All the better!" said my father cheerfully. "I shall like to see if she recognizes an old acquaintance. And if she doesn't I will know I have grown as elderly and grizzled as my glass assures me I have. That is," he added hastily, "if she proves to be the Miss Wolverton I knew fifteen years ago, of which, I believe you have some doubts."

I had no doubts at all. I was quite sure it *could* not be the same, but I said nothing, and twenty minutes later, in the parlor of the Old Green Tree, my heart was going like a bellows at the sound of Peggy's little feet tripping down the slippery oak staircase.

She did not see my father at first and came dancing in, shaking a pretty pink forefinger at me in mock reproach, and showing all her little white teeth as she smiled.

"You naughty man!" she began, but I, not being quite sure what she was going to say, hurried forward and interrupted her.

"I want you to meet my father, Peggy," I said breathlessly, and at the word Peggy turned and looked at my father and went white, all in a moment; and it was like a knife in my heart to see it, for I saw that she knew him. But Peggy recovered herself in a minute and swept my father a curtsy, and looked up at him under her long lashes in a way that I had thought was for me alone, and that pleased my father more than it pleased me. He put his hand on his heart and made her a low bow.

"Charmed to meet you once more, Miss Wolverton," he said with the air of a courtier. "You are looking as young and as beautiful as you looked fifteen years ago, when, if it hadn't been for this boy's mother, you would surely have broken my heart."

I saw Peggy give me a quick, sidelong glance, and for a moment there was an angry sparkle in her eye, and I trembled for what might be on the tip of her saucy tongue. But, whatever it was, she thought better of it. She tossed her head daintily and smiled bewitchingly.

"Oh, law! Lord Marchmont!" she said, "you 've not forgot how to flatter, I see. I was such a baby fifteen years ago I wonder I can remember you. But I do remember that you tried to turn my silly little head with your pretty speeches, and you ought to have known better than to talk so to a child who took every word you uttered for gospel truth."

My father chuckled, and I breathed easier. If she was only a child fifteen years ago she could not be more than thirty now — and what was a matter of ten or eleven years on the wrong side to two people who loved each other? I said to myself stoutly, for if ever there was a boy bewitched, Peggy's saucy curls and laughing eyes and flashing smile had bewitched me.

While I was comforting myself with the thought, my father was extending his invitation, and Peggy received it radiantly. A dinner at the Red Horse was a much finer prospect than one at the Old Green Tree, and that my father should offer her such a courtesy pleased her even more, I could see, than the prospect of a dinner. She ran out of the room for her bonnet and pelisse and came back in five minutes, breathless from haste, her cheeks rosy and her eyes dancing and looking prettier than ever with her bonnet framing her sparkling face like a picture, and her little dimpled chin nestling into the big bow of lilac ribbon that tied it on. I was proud as a peacock and I've no doubt showed it plainly to my father's shrewd eyes. He offered Peggy his arm and, I on the other side of her, we three walked decorously up Bridge Street, still quite full of people returning from church, and many of them turning to stare curiously at Peggy (who by this time was well known in Stratford, from her three weeks at Guild Hall) on the arm of a distinguished-looking stranger.

All through dinner Peggy devoted herself to my father, being arch and merry, and saucy, and languishing with him by turns, and at last I began to feel the pangs of jealousy. Was not my father a widower? And though I had grown accustomed to thinking of him as rather an old fellow, far beyond the years when he could please a girl's fancy, was he not as vigorous and as erect as I, and a far handsomer man, I had always said, than I could ever hope to be?

Nothing escaped Peggy. She saw the gloom settling down on me in spite of my struggles to hide it, and she took advantage of a moment when my father was speaking to the butler to whisper in my ear:

"You Goose! Can't you see it is all for you? I must do my best to win your father if we would ever hope to be happy." And with that she seized my hand under cover of the table and gave it a little squeeze.

Of course I could see it. And it was noble of her, too, for no doubt she would much rather be talking with me than with an old man nearly fifty, even so charming a one as my father. My heart grew light, I could feel my face clear and I joined in the conversation with great sprightliness. I saw my father glance at me curiously once or twice. He had not seen Peggy whisper in my ear and of course he had not seen her squeeze my hand, and he could not quite account for the sudden alteration in my demeanor, which was plainly perceptible to him.

It was after the dessert had been cleared away, Peggy sipping her champagne with us as we took our port, that my father exploded a bomb he had been carefully preparing:

Schools would begin the next morning. If I waited for the Monday morning coach, I would either be late for the first one or miss it altogether. Did not Miss Wolverton think it would be wise if he and I should get a post-chaise from the Red Horse and drive over this afternoon immediately after dinner? Missing one of the Greats was a serious matter, as Miss Wolverton probably knew, and should anything occur to cause my failure in getting my B.A. he himself (usually the most indulgent of fathers) would be inclined to be very severe with me.

I expected to see Peggy pout and tease, for this Sunday afternoon and evening with her meant much to me, and I could not believe meant less to her. To my astonishment she hesitated a moment and then she said very sweetly and seriously:

"You are quite right, Lord Marchmont, as you always are. Sir Lionel cannot afford to miss the Greats, still less can he afford to offend so good a father."

I saw my father color, whether from pleasure I could not be quite sure, but he bowed gravely and thanked her for agreeing with him, and, without waiting to discover whether I also agreed with him, summoned the butler once more and ordered a post-chaise to be ready in half an hour to start for Oxford. There were times when I would have dared to demur at such a summary procedure, but there were times, also, when my father's mood put me greatly in awe of him, and this was one of them.

The order having been given, my father was all graciousness and smiles to Peggy, and invited her, with charming cordiality, to be present in Oxford the next Sunday, which would be Show Sunday.

"I will be there myself and try to fill in any little gaps Lionel may leave open for me," he said. "I shall not leave Oxford until after Commemoration, when I can take my boy home with me to Clover Combe Court." And then he added, with a suavity I had never seen in my father, whose usual frank and hearty manner sometimes amounted to bluffness: "Lionel tells me that he could not summon up the requisite courage last night to tell you of his plans; perhaps he will tell them to you now in the few moments remaining to us while I attend to the bill. We will set you down at the Old Green Tree in our post-chaise."

He rose as he spoke, excused himself and went out to the bar, where he was sure to find the landlord, and left me alone with Peggy, who was white and red by turns at these ominous words of my father, and a steely look in her black eyes that I did not like.

I do not know how I blurted it out: that it was my father's plan, not mine; that it would be only two years; and that I should love her better every day and every hour of the two years; that I could wait a lifetime for her; but if she would but be true to me I would only have to wait two years, and then I could come back from exile and claim my father's promise and make her my wife and take her to Clover Combe Court to live.

She listened to my incoherent words impatiently, and finally she interrupted me, demanding in a voice like ice, that I be a little more explicit, and tell her where my exile was to be and how soon it was to begin.

I had hardly finished my embarrassed and stammering explanations to her, when my father returned, and Peggy's manner, which had been cold and hard to me, changed instantly. She was by turns gentle and pathetic and submissive and grieving with him; I was sure my father must be won to reconsider. But the post-chaise was at the door, the horses were stamping impatiently on the paved court, my father said if we were to get to Oxford before dark and before the road men were abroad, we would have to be off, and I helped Peggy into the chaise and it was hardly five minutes till we had left her at the door of the Old Green Tree, waving a white hand in farewell, and we were disturbing the Sabbath calm of Stratford, people looking out from behind drawn shutters at the unusual sound of a post-chaise rattling over the stones on Sunday, though the post boy had tied up his horn out of deference to the day, and no long-drawn windings of it were waking the sleepy echoes of the streets.

In a few minutes we left the noisy stones behind us and rumbled up onto Sir Hugh's great bridge, where I had stood the night before with my arm around Peggy, and across it into the soft dirt road winding between green fields and bearing us swiftly away from the gentle Avon to the gay waters of the Cher and old Oxford.

II

AN INTERESTING PARTY BOARDS OUR SHIP AT LE·HAVRE

ON the ride back to Oxford I had a more serious talk with my father than I ever remembered to have had, and I think I caught glimpses of his character and temper that I had never seen before.

I was sullen at first; it pains me now, when I think how gentle and forbearing with my pettish humor my father showed himself, and how churlishly I responded to all his overtures. But there came a moment when he seemed to think forbearance ceased to be a virtue, and he gave me to understand in a few stern words that I was not yet old enough, nor had I proved myself of sufficient discretion to have the making or the marring of my future in my own hands; that I would be the first to blame him, and rightly, too, in after years, should he allow me to make a fool of myself now.

Not once did he utter Peggy's name — that I could not have borne — but, of course, it was perfectly clear in what manner he considered me as making a fool of myself, and I was boiling with indignation. But at the last he touched my heart.

"My son," returning once more to his gentleness of manner, "you are all I have in the world. You bear a noble name, handed down to you by a long line of untarnished ancestry. The women who have married into the family have been of equal or nobler rank, and have brought with them sterling virtues and womanly graces to enrich the blood. I ask only that you take two years to consider whether, in your present choice, you are honoring your ancestors and ennobling your descendants. If, at the end of the two years, you are of the same mind, if you have each proved loyal to the other, I have nothing more to say. You will be of age — you can choose for yourself. Bring whom you will to Clover Combe Court and I will make her welcome; and I think you will agree with me that this is little enough for a gray-haired father to ask of his only son."

My mind was seething with conflicting emotions. Between my love for Peggy — which made her seem to me in all womanly graces and virtues the equal of any titled woman in the land — and my youthful and generous scorn of all aristocratic pretensions — for were not we, at Oxford, ardent disciples of Voltaire and Rousseau? — between these and the love and respect I owed my father, I was in such tumult of spirit I knew not how to make reply. But at the very last there had been a tremor in my father's voice — my gay and debonair father, *bon camarade* and *bon viveur,* whom I had never suspected of such deep feeling — that touched my heart; and I made such response as I thought a great concession on my part, though still somewhat surly in the fashion of making it.

"You are no doubt right, sir," I said. "I understand perfectly that in your eyes I am still a child and a foolish one. For two years I will abide by your judgment, but I pray you build no false hopes on either Miss Wolverton's failure in constancy or my own. This is no passing fancy on the part of either of us; but an abiding affection, founded on mutual esteem."

These were great words, and I liked the sound of them; though I have sometimes smiled since in recalling them. My father seemed to like them, too, if I could judge from the gravity of his utterance, a little belied, however, by the fleeting twinkle in his eye. He offered me his hand and said gravely:

"'T is a bond, my son. I thank you for it, and we will talk no more of it."

This last was such a relief to me that the latter part of our journey was as gay as the first part had been somber. My father might have been another boy like myself, and both of us off on some Sunday lark, for I think from both our hearts a load had been rolled: from mine, that my confession was made and I had been treated at least squarely; from my father s, that my promise was given, for he knew my word was my bond to be depended upon as his own.

I went to bed not at all that night, and I kept Hardwick up with me, cramming me for the Pass on Monday. I realized, now that it was so late, how much of my time had been squandered on Peggy, and I began to feel a little remorse for it, and to be filled with a feverish eagerness to make the most of the few hours left to me. All hope of a First was gone, dead as my interest in it and desire for it had been the last few weeks. But my interest and desire had both revived, now that it was too late, and I began to see myself for the first time as something of the fool I was sure my father must regard me.

I saw but little of my father during this week — cramming all night and Schools most of the day — but I made the Greats, though I did not deserve to, and could look forward with a clear conscience to Show Sunday and Peggy.

She had written me (I never showed Peggy's notes to anyone. Neither the penmanship nor the spelling were to be proud of, but I consoled myself with the thought that many a fine lady could not do as well) she had written me that the entire troupe was coming over Saturday evening, and would give As You Like It in New College gardens Monday afternoon. In a way, this was a disappointment to me. I would have liked Peggy for once without her theatrical surroundings, but in a way, too, it was a pleasure. I was quite wild about Peggy's playing, regarding her as the greatest of living actresses, and I had never seen her as Rosalind.

My aunt, my father's sister, who, since the death of my mother, had done the honors of Clover Combe Court and been a mother to me, was coming, also, for Show Sunday and Commemoration Week, and would also arrive Saturday evening. My duty to her would interfere with my attendance on Peggy, I feared, and that thought detracted somewhat from the pleasure I ought to have felt in her coming. The young are selfish, my aunt has often told me, but, also she has said she has no doubt it is a provision of nature wisely intended for the perpetuation of the species, and the carrying on of the great emprises of the world, that the old should think only of the pleasures and the well-being of the young, and that the young should think only of themselves, and of their own most weighty affairs.

"Love descends but does not ascend," is one of my Aunt Pamela's favorite sayings, and when I ask her what that means — "Wait, sir," she says, "till you have children of your own, and by the time they are well on in their teens you will know."

I trembled a little at the thought of her shrewd, though kindly eyes, reading Peggy like an open book. It would mean much to me if she read her to her liking; for in spite of her "Love descends," I loved my aunt in my selfish way, and would be much happier if she loved Peggy; and while dreading the meeting, I was eager for it, too, and anxious that Peggy should make a good impression both in dress and behavior. She had many admirers in Oxford, and I knew that as we promenaded the length of Broad Walk there would be many bold eyes ogling her, and sometimes Peggy was apt to show too plainly that she liked such attentions and to return them in kind, which I was very sure would shock Aunt Pamela's somewhat rigorous notions of propriety, should Peggy be betrayed into an exhibition of vanity before her.

I was of half a mind to give Peggy a word of caution in advance, though dreading to do so, from not being quite sure how she might take it, but I had no chance. Knowing that she would not be visible before mid-day, I presented myself at The Roebuck immediately after the service at St. Mary's, which I had attended with my Aunt Pamela and my father, only to receive a little note from her to the effect that she was tired and should take her dinner in bed, and please call for her at three o'clock, when she would be ready for the Show.

I would not go back to the Mitre and dine with my father and Aunt Pamela, since I had excused myself to them on the score of an engagement with Peggy, and as I did not feel equal to the chaffing from my fellow students, that I knew would meet me in the dinner hall, I retired to my rooms, ordered up a cold lunch and spent the intervening hours in attempting a sonnet to Peggy in imitation of one of Mr. Shakespeare's; and in rebrushing and retying my hair and rearranging my laces. I was just starting for the Roebuck once more, when my father presented himself at my rooms, and learning where I was going, offered to accompany me; and so I had no chance to give Peggy my warning.

There was no fault, however, to be found with Peggy's dress when she came down to present herself to us in the inn parlor. She had donned her bravest attire, for Show Sunday was intended for dress display, and if Peggy's finery was a little more showy and gaudy than my aunt's quiet tastes would approve, there would be others as gaudily dressed to bear her company, and it became her mightily. Neither was there any fault to be found in her behavior to my father, unless, to my jealous eyes, it seemed a little over-sweet, for I could see that my father was looking handsomer than usual, and his attire, too, was of the bravest. He, also, was ready for Show Sunday, and I had noted that more admiring glances from bright eyes fell to the father's share than to the son's, on our way to The Roebuck.

But I took shame to myself for such unworthy thoughts, unjust equally to my father and to Peggy, and strutted proudly by her side, as, Peggy, once more on my father's arm, a goodly looking couple, we walked to the Mitre for my aunt. Now was the crucial moment, and I felt the blood surging to my temples and pounding in my ears as I presented Peggy. Peggy swept a low and deferential curtsy that pleased me greatly, and what did my stately Aunt Pamela do but lay her hand caressingly on Peggy's shoulder and exclaim in the friendliest fashion:

"Why, my child, how pretty you are! No wonder the boy has lost his head and his heart!"

Peggy blushed with pleasure through all her powder and paint. 'T was no disgrace, then, to use both; every great lady did, and as for an actress, it was but part of her profession and her duty to make herself as young and as beautiful as medicants for the complexion could manage.

I saw but little of Peggy during the Show. My father absorbed much of her time, and there were other aspirants for her favor that secured some of it among the gay company that thronged the Broad Walk; while Merton men were constantly carrying me off to meet their sisters — fine ladies, all of them, and many of them Honorables — and sometimes my father must present me to the daughter of an old friend or fellow collegian, and I must smirk and bow and do my manners with my eyes ever furtively watching Peggy, and my heart constantly following her.

Once, just at the turn of the promenade, I came upon my father in earnest conversation with her. I thought my father looked stern and Peggy greatly disturbed. She was angry, and frightened, and subdued, and haughty, by turns; and I longed greatly to know why, though I would ask neither of them, for I said to myself, proudly — if they do not tell me of their own accord I will not force their confidence — and I knew I could trust them both. Yet, later, my father was all politeness to Peggy, and Peggy was all pretty daring and coquetry with him, which seemed either to amuse or to please him, or both.

Though I saw little of Peggy on Show Sunday I saw much of her on Monday. I sat in New Gardens while the shadows were lengthening on the velvety turf, and the air was filled with the fragrance of roses and honeysuckle, and for three hours I feasted my eyes on her — the most bewitching Rosalind the world had ever seen, I verily believed. My ears were glutted with her praises on all sides, and most grateful among them were my Aunt Pamela's, who sat beside me and murmured every little while, "No wonder! No wonder!" Which I knew to mean, no wonder I was over head and ears in love.

But the moment the performance was over, Peggy was mine for the rest of the evening. This was the first week in July; in two weeks my packet would sail; on Wednesday morning the Lord High Chancellor himself would tap me three times on the head with the time-honored copy of the Bible in use many years for that purpose, and make a B.A. of me; and my father had arranged that at the earliest possible moment after the conclusion of that ceremony, we three should start for Clover Combe Court, for there were many preparations to be made for my long journey. Peggy was to start back for Stratford early Tuesday morning (on Tuesdays and Thursdays the coaches left in the morning) and my last chance for seeing her for two interminable years would be Monday evening. Therefore I had demanded, and neither my aunt nor my father had the heart to object, that this last evening should be devoted to Peggy.

I waited only for her to get out of Rosalind's clothes and into her own before carrying her off to Iffley for supper. We ate it in a picturesque little inn on a balcony overhanging the Isis and when supper was over we punted lazily up the Isis to the Cherwell and up the Cher, until we reached a shady nook by Addison's Walk.

What we said to each other through that long evening would fill the Bodley Library, I think. I look back at it sadly: the ingenuous young fellow, his heart brimming over with his first love, pouring out the wealth of it on an arid waste that never could blossom in response. All the promises she made me rang true to my ears; all her protestations of undying love fell sweetly on my heart; yet there were moments when, infatuated though I was, blind and deaf to everything but Peggy and her charms, a faint uneasiness stole into my mind. Why did she sometimes, when I was breathing my most ardent vows, look troubled; why did she half start, at other times, to say something that she repented of before it was spoken? Why did she offer a thousand reasons, all of them trivial, why she could not come to Greenwich to see me sail and bid me farewell, as I ardently desired her to do? I know why, now, but then I had only a moment's uneasiness, and soon was lost once more in a radiant sea that engulfed me in its warm waves, bearing us both on, I believed, to a golden future of bliss.

The moon was well on its way to the full and threw lovely traces of shade and shine over Peggy as it fell through the limes and beeches of Addison's Walk. For at least three weeks

I thought of her every night as she looked that evening under the shadow of Magdalen's walls and always with bounding joy at the thought. But three weeks is but a mote in a man's life, and it has never been any joy to me since to think of her as she looked then.

The moon was hanging low in the west (and Peggy had yawned audibly many times) when at last we climbed the bank into Addison's Walk and through the Magdalen Quads. It was Commemoration Week, so the gates were left open and, fearing neither bull-dog nor Proctor, we walked boldly down The High to Cornmarket Street and so to The Roebuck.

At the door I said good-by to her with a bursting heart, and could hardly trust my voice to whisper—"In two years, Peggy." "In two years," she whispered back, waved a white hand and fled through the door.

. . . .

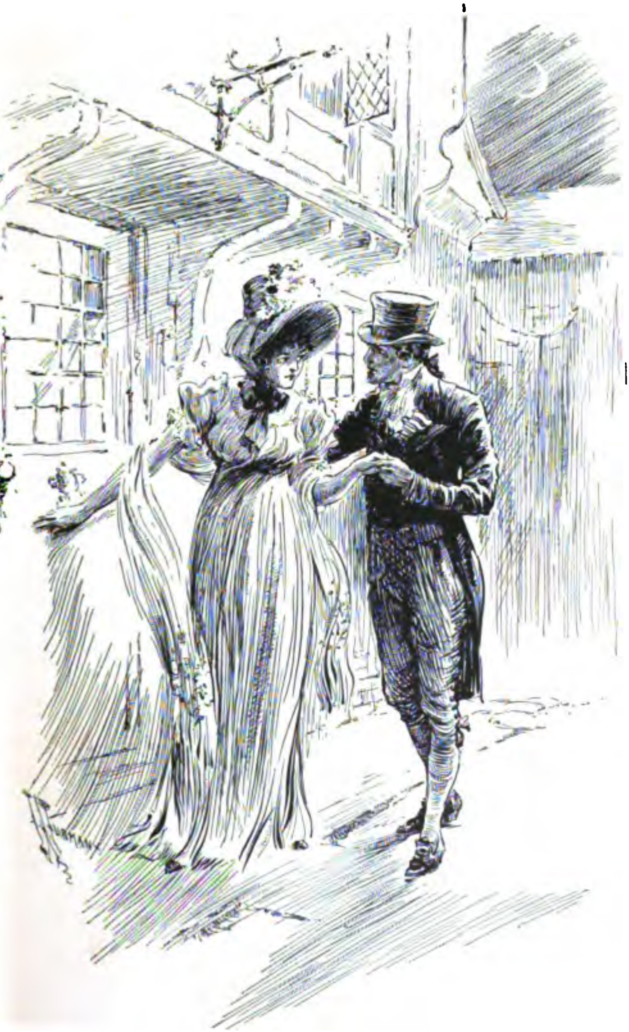
So it was no wonder I was sad when I said good-by to my father on the Greenwich dock and saw the green shores of merry England slipping away from me where lay my heart deep buried in Peggy's breast—for so I believed.

I have but little remembrance of the voyage as far as Le Havre. My thoughts were all of Peggy, and though I had a youth's natural curiosity about voyaging into new lands, my heart was like a lump of lead in my breast and curiosity was drowned in grief. As we neared the French shores I began to arouse from my lethargy. War had been declared and no English vessel would have dared to cross the channel, but our ship bore the American flag, our captain was an undoubted Yankee skipper and our papers bore the stamp of the Government of the United States. If a Frenchie had wanted, she would not have dared attack us, since, with Mr. Jefferson as President, France and the United States were on the most cordial terms.

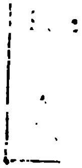
We were to stop at Le Havre to take on passengers and merchandise and I was glad to get a glimpse of the enemy's country from such safe vantage as the deck of an American ship. The harbor was crowded with craft of all kinds: men of war, yawls and pinnaces, evidently part of the great fleet Bonaparte was preparing to hurl against England. I looked at them scornfully, as became a true Briton, yet with the keenest interest, too, and a great longing. Why should I be exiled to America just now, when great deeds were stirring? But for Peggy, I believed that I might be even now on board a ship at Plymouth, getting ready to meet those same dapper little Frenchmen before me, wearing the tricolor in their caps and proudly strutting the decks of those ships, between which, by means of much tacking and veering, we were laboriously making our way.

The harbor was crowded but we had a skillful pilot and soon made a mooring at the foot of a long pier where great bales and boxes of merchandise were piled ready to be stowed away in our hull. I looked to see what passengers would come aboard. There were not many of them, but two parties interested me greatly. One was a closely veiled young lady with her maid, or so I took her to be. She was not so closely veiled but that I could catch a glimpse of waving masses of red brown hair, and soft dark eyes that matched the hair in color. I caught a glimpse, too, of the white nape of a neck. Not Peggy's own was half so white, and I had never seen a prouder poise of any woman's head. A gentleman was with her, who I could see placed her particularly in the Captain's care, but neither the gentleman nor the maid sailed with her. They said good-by to her on the deck and then they stood on the pier watching her till the boat sailed — the maid weeping bitterly, and the gentleman calling up to her with words of cheer and encouragement — for such I took them to be from the tones, though they were in French and therefore but meaningless to me.

I was deeply interested in the little party, for there seemed to me to be a mystery connected with it and I could not refrain from conjectures as to what the mystery might be. But I was not so deeply interested that I did not take particular note, also, of a still stranger party. The head of it was a young man but a little older than myself, I judged, but in every way a most striking figure. He must have stood a good six feet four



I said good-by to her with a bursting heart



in his stockings, and his shoulders were broad in proportion; while he was as slender and lithely built in the flanks as any race horse. His hair curled on his shoulders in thick golden ringlets tied back with a black ribbon, and clustered in short curls around a brow as white and cheeks as pink as any maiden's. But for the level glance of his eye and the firm molding of his chin, I might have thought him too effeminate in looks; but, as it was, he struck me as the perfect type of manly beauty — one of the old gods of Greece come down to earth.

Striking as was the young man, the rest of his party were no less so. They consisted of a negro man and a negro woman — the man in the livery of a servant, the woman wearing a bright colored turban on her woolly locks and a broad white handkerchief crossed over her sable breast. I had seen but one negro in my life, and never had seen a negress. I looked at them curiously and thought that but for the good nature that seemed to radiate from every pore of their shining black skins, and evidenced by constant grins displaying dazzling rows of white teeth, I should have felt fear of such ship companions; and I wondered that so fine a young gentleman should choose to travel with so strange a retinue. Then I bethought me that they might be from America, since that was the land of the blacks. They were doubtless slaves, and I looked at him more curiously still and wondered if all Americans were as big and as handsome as this one, and if so, I could not be so greatly surprised that they had wrested their liberty even from the hands of the mightiest nation on the globe.

The passengers were all aboard, the merchandise was stowed away, and still we waited. I looked down to see why and discovered that they were having trouble in making a great black stallion walk the planks laid down for him from the pier to the ship. He was a magnificent creature with one white foot and a star on his forehead. Two men on either side of him were trying to urge him on, but I think they were afraid of him. There was fire in the brute's eye and danger in his quivering nostril and back-pointed ears and flying hoofs.

When they had tried many times in vain to urge him on board I saw the American giant (for so I had mentally dubbed him) go down to the beast, lay one hand on his quivering flank and take hold of his bridle with the other. He gave a word of command in French to the men and they fell back quickly, glad to be free from the dangerous brute. Then he spoke to the horse quietly:

"Come, Bourbon," he said in English. "Come on, my good fellow," and the stallion dropped his head and followed his master meekly aboard, more like a tame kitten than the death-dealing brute of a moment before.

And I, who love horses and admire extravagantly fine horsemanship, decided the big American was a man after my own heart and greatly to be desired as a friend.

III

A GLANCE THAT HAUNTS ME

AND a friend he came to be before the five weeks of our stay on shipboard were over, though it was several days before I so much as thought of him, since for those days I was deep buried under a sea of sorrow: the waves of despair, mountain-high, rolling up and breaking over me, pouring all their floods upon me and crushing me under their weight of woe.

We were not out of sight of land, the blue line of France's chalk cliffs still faintly visible in the offing, and I looking at them steadily with a strange thrill as I realized that now, indeed, was I off on unknown seas, and this was my last glimpse of land for weeks — I was hanging over the taffrail with my eyes fixed on those distant shores, when the Captain came up to me and handed me two letters.

"They were not to be delivered to you, sir, until we were well out from Lee Havver; those was my instructions," he said.

I seized them eagerly; one was from Peggy, one from my father. How good of them! How thoughtful of them! I exclaimed to myself gratefully, to have letters delivered to me, a last fond message, when I was far out at sea! and was proceeding to tear open Peggy's letter when I noticed on a corner of the envelope, in my father's handwriting —"To be opened first."

I smiled at the needlessness of the direction, and thought it must be one of my father's jests — he dearly loved a jest — but I wondered a little how Peggy's letter could have come into his possession even long enough for him to add the instructions. Then I thought that possibly my father had himself proposed the plan to Peggy to give me so pleasant a surprise, and had

had her forward her letter to him that he might deliver it with his own to the captain. I glowed with gratitude to my father at the thought, and then I lost no more time but opened Peggy's letter.

At the very opening words my heart stood still. My eyes were blurred and so dazed was I that for the moment I could read no further. Then I gathered myself together and read on desperately. It was but a brief letter but every word was a dagger:

"SIR LINEL: This leter is writ at your fother's *reqest.* It is to *enform* you that when you reseeve *this* i will be *marede* to sir Charles Townsby who has *courted* me for *menny* years. I pray your fergivness, sir linel. I *did* like *you* but yure fother wuld never let us *mary.* In wun thing i have deseeved you. I am *much older* than you think, much much tu old to be yr Wife.

"Yrs truly
"PEGGY WOLVERTON (TOWNSBY).

"P. S. I tried to tell you that last night on the char, but I koulden find the hart. "PEGGY."

How long I stood leaning on the taffrail, my eyes glued to those baleful words, I know not. When at last I came to myself a little, I crushed the letter in my hand and rushed to my cabin, head down, looking neither to the right nor to the left lest someone read the misery in my eyes. I threw myself on my bunk and lay there a long time with little sensation of any kind but a dull ache. I could not believe it, I *would* not believe it. Then as I went over, in my mind, every word of Peggy's letter, conviction was forced upon me.

I had met that Sir Charles Townsby, met him dangling at Peggy's heels when I first saw her in Oxford. I remembered him only as a disreputable-looking fellow, decidedly seedy, and favoring me with some very ugly scowls as I showed my open infatuation for Peggy. A sudden thought struck me. It brought me some comfort, though I am ashamed to confess it.

My father had forced Peggy to marry Sir Charles to prevent her marrying me.

For a few minutes I was as bitterly angry with my father as if I knew this to be the truth and not merely a conjecture on my part. Peggy had certainly loved me — it was impossible to feign so well. And to make my anguish more poignant I recalled every sweet token of her love in the six weeks I had known her, and groaned aloud. Sir Charles Townsby! I loathed the thought. It was my father's doing, I raged; no living woman, least of all my dainty Peggy, could prefer such a man.

It was hours before I had the heart to open my father's letter and when I did read it every word made me wince. It was a very tender letter, but its very tenderness was gall and wormwood to my open wounds. It was partly as I thought. My father had not forced Peggy to marry Sir Charles, but he had used some means to compel her to break off with me. This he confessed to me and rehearsed in brief the conversation to the disturbing effect of which on Peggy I had been witness on Show Sunday.

My father wrote:

"'Either, Miss Wolverton,' I said to her, 'you will put an end to this affair with my son, or I will report to him what I know of that old affair with Harry Thornleigh and Sir Charles Townsby.'

"'What do you know of it?' asked Peggy, looking up at me with the glance under her long lashes that she considers fetching, and that, indeed, has proved itself so with many a man.

"'I know *all,*' I answered impressively. Then Peggy pouted and began to beg.

"'You *could* not be so mean, Lord Marchmont.'

"'I could,' I answered firmly.

"'Then you have changed greatly from the Lord Marchmont I knew fifteen years ago,' in her archest manner.

"'I have changed in one respect, Miss Wolverton,' I said. 'The wiles used upon the son do not seem to me half so alluring as when they were used upon the father.'

"She smiled and looked pleased.

"'And no doubt,' I added, 'they are not quite as effective as they were then. Fifteen years is a long time in a woman's life, and are bound to leave their devastating traces on a woman's charms.'

"This made her furious, as, indeed, I knew it would and intended it should.

"'You cannot expect, sir, that I will be anxious to grant your request to me in return for a deliberate insult from you,' she said haughtily.

"'No, Peggy,' I said — everybody called her Peggy fifteen years ago, and perhaps they do still —'I do not expect you to be *anxious* to grant my request, but I expect you to grant it.' And then I proceeded to give her some very cogent reasons why she should do so. I convinced her, finally, and we came to terms. I made it a part of the contract that she should inform you by letter that she did not love you and did not wish to marry you, and that the letter should be sent to me to be delivered to you when I saw fit. I arranged with Captain Skinner that neither of these letters should be delivered to you until you were well away from Le Havre, fearing that your ardent temper would impel you to return and try to reverse Miss Wolverton's decision if there were any possibility of a return."

And then my father added:

"My son, you may think I have taken an unwarrantable liberty in interfering with your love affair, but Miss Wolverton did not think so. She knew that I knew that of her that would warrant any father in the course I am taking. She is in *every* way unworthy of you; try to forget her. I do not know the contents of her letter to you, but if she has kept to her bargain and told you that she will not marry you, then I will never reveal that which I know of her. If she has not kept to her bargain, I will some day tell you what will, I am sure, finally destroy all love for her. But if she has kept to her promise, then say to yourself — would any true woman lightly give up the man she loved at the bidding of another? That in itself ought to be proof to you of her unworthiness."

Then followed a few words of sympathy, simply expressed, but coming from my father, who had never used such words to me, they meant much. He said also that he rejoiced greatly that I was to have these two years in a foreign land, filled, as they doubtless would be, with strange adventures. There could be no better panacea he was sure, for such a hurt as I had received.

I could not tell, when I had finished reading his letter, whether I was more angered by it or soothed. I was in no state of mind to be willing to believe the horrible things of Peggy my father intimated. I scorned to believe them! Had there been anything in our intercourse ever to suggest that she could be so base? Then it flashed into my mind that our "intercourse" had been but an intermittent one of six weeks' duration, not a long time in which to exhaust the capabilities of a human soul—"especially a woman's," I added to myself bitterly.

It was my first real feeling of anger toward Peggy; heretofore it had been all for my father. But my anger soon turned on my father again. With a sudden flash of suspicion I believed the "cogent reasons" that he had used with Peggy were *money*. He had bought her off! For five minutes I was in a towering rage with my father till the tide turned again and the sober truth came home to me that a woman who could be bought was not the woman for me—was the basest of all women.

Three miserable days I spent in such unhappy swinging of the pendulum from anger with my father to doubt and distrust of Peggy, and more than once I seriously contemplated the advisability of throwing myself overboard and so putting an end to an existence which, with the hopelessness of youth, I was sure would never be anything but a burden to myself and a weariness to my friends. The possibility that happiness could ever return to me I did not for a moment consider.

To all messages of inquiry from the captain I sent back word that I was suffering with *mal de mer*, which, as a strong nor'easter was blowing, and the sea running high, and more than half the passengers abed, need not seem incredible to the captain; especially if any of the messengers he sent reported to him the haggard looks and wild eyes and speech of the man they always found tossing restlessly on his bunk.

But toward the end of the third day, the storm apparently increasing in violence, the weird sound of the wind whistling through the shrouds coming down to me in my cabin, and I tossing in my bunk, not now with anguish of soul but with the violence of the motion of the boat, I began to long for the society of my fellows. And at that moment through the keyhole, or by some other entrance, came the fragrance of broiling ham. Now to a man who has been fed for three days on broths and other sick food, and but little of that from a supposed illness which makes all food distasteful, I know no fragrance more delightful. I could hear, too, the clatter of dishes in the ship's saloon — they were preparing the evening meal. I made a hasty resolve to seclude myself no longer. I rose from my bunk, made a hurried but careful toilet and walked out into the saloon.

They were already seated at table, such of the ship's passengers, that is to say, as were in a plight to be, which was not many — scarcely a dozen in all. Now I had felt not the slightest qualm of that illness I had claimed to be suffering from, doubtless because, although this was my first sea voyage, Clover Combe Court lay on the Devonshire coast and from earliest boyhood I had been free of the fishermen's boats at Clover Combe and had grown to be as much at home on water as on land.

The captain was seated at the head of the table and at one side of him sat the big American. I had forgotten his existence in the last three days, and at sight of him I was struck once more by the size and beauty of the man. There was a vacant seat beside him, as there were many other vacant seats, and the captain, catching sight of me, hailed me.

"What ho, Sir Lionel! You have found your sea legs in the height of the storm! Not such a bad sailor after all. Here is your seat, sir, been staring at us for three days like a hungry dog waiting for its bone. Sit down, sir, sit down," and he waved me to the seat beside the yellow-haired American.

His voice was none of the softest on any occasion, but owing to the noise of the storm he had bellowed at me as if he were shouting orders through a fog horn. As I took my seat he introduced me to my neighbor, but either from the way he shouted it, or from the clatter and banging of everything in the cabin, or, more like, from still another cause, I did not catch it.

The other cause was that, just as I turned to take my seat, I intercepted a startled glance from two soft brown eyes opposite. Seated on the other side of the captain was the mysterious French lady of whose auburn locks and beautiful eyes I had caught a glimpse through her veil at Le Havre. Why she should be so startled by my appearance I could not guess. I hoped that my haggard looks, of which I had suddenly become uncomfortably conscious, had not alarmed her. Still more I could not understand why, as I let my eyes meet hers for a moment, that deep blush should overspread the creamy whiteness of her face, rising to her very temples, while her eyes fell on her plate in visible embarrassment.

The captain presented me to her also, and this time I caught the name — Mademoiselle Desloge of Paris. I bowed, and Mademoiselle barely lifted her eyes as far as the tip of my lace tie in response to my salutation, while another wave of crimson inundated her face.

It was most remarkable, and I believe my seat-mate thought so too, for I have no doubt it was for the sake of covering her embarrassment that he began in French — in which language the three had been conversing when I entered — some lively remarks about the storm. I had to confess that I did not understand French, and I know not why it should have occasioned me any mortification to do so, but it did.

"I had a French governess when I was a lad," I said in excuse for myself, "but I always despised the language and thought it an unmanly affectation to be able to speak it fluently. So I learned as little of it as possible and promptly forgot what little I learned, and at Oxford, you know, they do not teach it. Of course I regret it now."

My neighbor laughed at my excuse, but he seemed much interested at my mention of Oxford and said he had desired greatly to visit England, and one of the things he had most desired to do there had been to visit that ancient seat of learning.

As politely as I knew how I hinted a question as to why he had not done so, but his face clouded in a moment.

"I am hurrying home, Sir Lionel, on a hasty summons from my mother. My father is ill," he said briefly, and I hastened to apologize for my question and to express my sympathy. He received both apologies and expressions of sympathy with a bow, and to change the theme to a less unhappy one, I spoke of being a witness to his conquest of his horse, and I rather glowed over the beauty of the animal and his mastery of it.

"He must have grown up with you from colthood," I said, "to be so submissive to your slightest word and touch, for he seemed a dangerous fellow when those four men were trying to get him aboard."

"No," he said, "he is not dangerous as a rule; but he was beside himself with fright. He has been in my possession but a week, but he is of so fine a temper and spirit that in that week he has come to know me and love me and obey me like an old friend."

From that we fell to talking of horses, and it being a subject in which we both delighted we were soon feeling on familiar terms of acquaintance. The captain joined in occasionally with questions or remarks which showed he knew nothing of horses, but displaying always a quaint good sense that I believe to be common to seamen, and particularly to Yankee seamen, as I have come to know them.

But the captain hurried away a few minutes after my arrival. His place was on deck, he said, in nor'east storms, and I was left with only the American to talk to, for of course I could address no word to my beautiful vis-a-vis, having no French at my command. The American, however, feeling, no doubt, that she must not be left entirely to herself, addressed her several times in what struck me as very fluent French. Her replies were brief and still with an air of embarrassment, but for the first time in my life I recognized what I had often heard spoken of as the rhythmical beauty of the French tongue.

Very shortly Mademoiselle, too, excused herself, rising hurriedly from the table, and I, having a three days' appetite to satisfy, and not liking to show my eagerness for food in the presence of those beautiful eyes (once I had caught her furtively looking at me), was not altogether sorry to see her go.

But as she was turning away from her chair some sudden impulse seemed to move her: she turned quickly back and for the fraction of a second gazed straight into my eyes with a look that was friendly, merry, daring and quizzing all in one.

I must have shown my astonishment in my eyes at this unexpected freak of hers, for the wave of embarrassment swept over her face again, she stooped hurriedly on pretense of picking up a handkerchief she had dropped — I believed it was only a pretense — and fled swiftly to her own cabin.

Where had I seen a look like that in a woman's eyes before? It haunted me for full five minutes; then I gave it up and concluded that all women were alike — doubtless Peggy's dark eyes had often looked just such a saucy challenge into mine.

IV

I PRACTISE MY FRENCH AND DISCOVER MY PAINS ARE NEEDLESS

THAT evening my new acquaintance, the big American, and I sat out on deck in the lee of the cabin for a full hour, enjoying the majesty of the storm and finding many matters of mutual interest on which to converse, when the thunder of the waves pounding on the deck, and often breaking over us in spray, and the roar of the wind whistling through the shrouds and driving our boat before it with only the flying jib and one top sail set, would permit. I learned much of my companion's history and told him much of mine, but they were only such parts of our lives as were open to the inspection of all men — neither of us, until long after, touched upon the great story of our lives, the story of our loves.

I was surprised, and a little disgusted the next morning, to find myself in a comparatively cheerful frame of mind. What right had I to feel even a passing moment of cheerfulness when my heart was crushed under the heaviest weight of woe that had ever fallen on a poor mortal! Moreover, to my yet greater disgust, I found myself, at unguarded moments, looking forward with something like interest to meeting at breakfast my two table companions of the night before. I had never expected, and did not desire, to feel any interest in any human being again. It was bad enough to be feeling pleasure at the thought of meeting the American, but I could not conceal from myself that I was also looking forward with something like interest to meeting the Frenchwoman.

"It is curiosity," I said to myself; "an emotion much to be despised, but responsible for my wondering whether the creature will favor me with another of her peculiar glances. Doubtless she is one of those bold French coquettes, of whose wiles I have heard much, who takes me to be an easy victim of her blandishments." And I gloated to myself a little over her dismay when she should discover herself so greatly mistaken, and that it was a heart of stone, henceforth and forever impervious to all women's wiles, that she was vainly practising her arts upon.

It was somewhat to my disappointment, therefore, that Miss Desloge did not appear at breakfast — I was rather anxious for an opportunity to show her I was not the easy dupe she had taken me for. When she did not appear at dinner, nor at supper, nor at any meal for the three days following, my uneasiness grew to an extent that could not be concealed from myself, and I feared might, at times, be perceptible to others. When I ventured, in the most casual way, to inquire for her of the captain, it seemed to me that he returned only an evasive answer. I heard him mumble something like "seasickness, I suppose," but it was only mumbled since it was uttered through a mouth half filled with ham and potato.

Moreover, it could not be seasickness, since the very evening of my inquiry I caught a glimpse of her (I could not be mistaken in the elegance of her figure and the proud poise of her head) leaning on the taffrail and gazing off toward the shores we had left behind us. The violence of the storm had abated; for the first time since sailing we had a clear sky and a sunset of surpassing beauty. In the rose-hued sea the setting sun had left behind it, swam the silver crescent of the new moon and just above it glowed the pale gold star of Venus. It was inevitable that I should recall the last time that I had seen the star and crescent, hanging over the brow of Edge Hill on my way to Stratford and Peggy. And in as melancholy a mood as Miss Desloge seemed to be, I leaned on the traffrail and gazed back toward the shores, long since vanished in the east, where Peggy dwelt. For the moment all her perfidy was forgotten, only the memory of her immortal charms remained to me, her dear, enticing ways, her tender smile, her joyous laugh, the pressure of her little hand.

When I came to myself and remembered that there was no longer any dear and dainty little Peggy Wolverton, only a coarse-minded Lady Townsby, who had sold her charms to a monster in exchange for a title, I shuddered and lifted my head. The silver crescent had already sunk into the western sea and Peggy's star and mine was fast sliding down into the watery abyss. "Well, let the waves overwhelm it!" I said to myself bitterly; "let it sink never to rise again!" and then, by some suggestion I did not recognize, I looked around for the Frenchwoman, whom for the time I had forgotten.

She had vanished. The decks were deserted. A bleak wind had sprung up with the setting of the sun and the brightly lighted cabin looked inviting. I went in and found my American, and the noisy mirth of the passengers — now fully recovered from their illness — being pleasing to neither of us, we took our pipes to his cabin, which was more commodious and with more luxurious furnishings than mine, and there, as comfortable as one could hope to be at sea, we grew more and more friendly over our pipes, our talk hovering around the verge of the topic absorbing us both, but skimming lightly away from it as it found itself too near the precipice.

I had only college tales to tell him and, for adventures, the following of the hounds at Clover Combe Court, but he had real adventures to tell, of life on the frontier in America and later as an aide to Bonaparte in France, that sent my blood coursing faster in my veins. He looked like one born for great deeds and high adventure, I said to myself, and he had not belied his looks.

It was a week later that I told my story to the American as we paced the deck together. The moon, well on in its first quarter, illuminated the ship with its soft radiance, not too brilliant to extinguish the stars which had begun to change their places in the heavens as our course lay farther south. I was struck in particular with the fact that Scorpio was riding so high. I did not remember ever before seeing the twin stars in the tip of its tail. But looking at Scorpio must needs remind me of Peggy and our last night in Stratford when Antares glowered at me over the roof of the Red Horse as I came home so late.

And before I knew it my story was out. I waxed eloquent in the telling of it, and I have no doubt I made Peggy out the most divine creature the world had ever seen. Certainly I spared no sable tints in painting my own woes; though I dwelt not on them long, every line was laid in deepest dye. There was no future for me. This exile that I had entered upon, looking forward to its happy termination in two years, I was now sure would be a perpetual one. I did not believe I would ever care to return to a land where I had so loved and suffered, where every tree and brook and bird and flower would be but a reminder of Peggy, and where at any moment I would be in danger of coming face to face with her.

The American could not have been more than two or three years older than I, yet in many ways, I can see now, he was vastly my senior in experience and judgment. He listened to me courteously and, indeed, with a genuine sympathy that could not be mistaken. He knew how to say the right word in the right way, neither too much nor too little, and he made me the most generous return possible for my confidence: he gave me his own.

Also, the telling of his story was the best medicine he could have administered to my wound, in every detail it was so different from mine. He had loved above his rank, or so he said, a Princess of Condé, whom he met in St. Louis in Spanish America, and whom he had afterwards met in Paris. He had never had any hopes, but no one could know her as he had known her, without loving her, even to his own undoing. She had fled from Paris and from the persecutions of Bonaparte just before he himself had left France. She had gone, accompanied by the Prince de Polignac, to seek refuge with her cousin the young Duc d' Enghiem in Baden, and he would have no means of knowing whether she had arrived in safety for weeks. The prince had promised to write him and he hoped to hear within a week or two after his arrival in America, but in the meantime he was suffering great anxiety and he could hardly be more sorrowfully anxious over the condition in which he should find his father on his return home, than he was as to the tidings that he might receive from the prince. Bonaparte was a tireless foe and he would not easily let so rich a prize as the Countess of Baloit escape him.

This was a wonderful array of great names he let slip so easily through his lips, and I was well enough versed in the history of my times to know how great. I even remembered hearing of the return of the Countess de Baloit to Paris and the plans Bonaparte had made for her marriage. My own story seemed small and mean by comparison. I began to fear I had not loved worthily, and to realize that it was better to look too high than too low, and I really believe it did more to set Peggy in her true light with me than anything else could have done, for I could not help comparing her with the Countess de Baloit as the American had painted her — a woman as noble in character as in rank — and I did not wonder at the settled melancholy in my friend's face and manner, since I did not doubt his love was as hopeless as it seemed.

It was on the same evening that another incident occurred that I believe also helped to dim the brilliant colors in which Peggy's image had hitherto shone. For several days now, Mademoiselle Desloge had been quite regular at her meals. If she had been suffering with *mal de mer* she had fully recovered, for though she vouchsafed me only a bow of the coldest, with no hint of a smile accompanying it, and no signs of coquetry in her red brown eyes, I could see for myself that she ate with good appetite and that her cheeks bore the hue of health: that faint tinge of rose that is the attribute of a creamy skin like hers.

Although she greeted me coldly, she was graciousness itself to the captain and the American, conversing freely with them in French, which began to have a maddening effect on me, since it shut me off to my own cogitations, which were not always the cheerfulest, or abandoned me to the mercies of two cockney Englishmen, one beside me and one opposite, both bound on a business trip to the United States. I resolved to recall what I could of my forgotten French that I might be able to join, by a word or a phrase, at least, in the conversation going on at the head of the table.

To that end, while apparently absorbed in the contents of my plate, I began to listen intently, and even painfully, to their discourse, and much to my delight I discovered that I could understand enough of it to follow the gist of what they were saying. I even began to formulate in my mind slow and labored replies, of the tritest, to some of their speeches. It was coming back to me, and for the next three days I spent an hour in my cabin writing out imaginary conversations in execrable French. I even pressed the American into my service. I told him how much I began to regret the neglect of my French and begged him to converse with me at intervals, slowly and simply as he would with a child, and perhaps I could recover some of it. And being the soul of good nature he complied, and I was beginning to gain a certain amount of fluency and confidence.

It was on the evening when the American and I had opened our souls to one another that I ventured to try on Mademoiselle the French I had been practising so diligently for three days. It was a balmy evening, we had a free wind and a flowing sea, and our ship, graceful and swift as the sea gull for which it was named, went bounding over the waves like a thing of life, dipping into the trough and rising to the next crest, with a motion as free and graceful as my hunter Sport's when he takes fences and ditches in flight after the hounds.

The American and I had been pacing the deck as we talked, and several times we had passed the captain and Mademoiselle Desloge, Mademoiselle seated on a low capstan and the captain standing beside her. He was explaining the rigging, sails and ropes to her, as was easy to discover without any great effort on the part of a passerby. But as we came up to them for the third time the captain called to my companion that he was ready to explain the problem in navigation he had been discussing with the American the day before, if he would step to his cabin with him for a few minutes. He responded to the captain's invitation with alacrity and both of them excusing themselves to Mademoiselle Desloge, they went away, leaving her on my hands.

Now was my chance. I had long since concluded I had been mistaken about the coquetry I thought I had discovered on my first meeting with Mademoiselle, but all the more was I puzzled as I remembered that look, and it made me the more eager, I think, to have some acquaintance with her and discover what her glance had meant; for I was quite sure now that it had a meaning; that it had been given with intention and was no idle humor. I had not responded to it properly and so there had never been another.

In my labored and halting French, therefore, where the accent, I fancy, was even worse than the grammar, I began:

"Il fait beau temps, ce soir, Mademoiselle, mais ausçi, il fait chaud. Woudriez vous avoir le bonté faire un promenade du naviro avec moi? Je pense quil fera plus de fraicheur en marchont, n'est ce pas?"

Why I should have made my opening sentence so long, I know not. Perhaps I thought I would have no chance to make another and I would use my whole vocabulary at once, for Mademoiselle had heretofore treated me only to most distant bows.

She was as courteous, no doubt, as the French are proverbially supposed to be, but she could not quite suppress a little twinkle of amusement in her soft dark eyes at my labored French. She did not interrupt me, but waited till I had quite finished and then replied in English as perfect as my French was poor, with perhaps the slightest accent, but only enough to add a charm of its own to the thrush-like quality of her voice.

"Thank you, Sir Lionel," she said; "you are very good. Yes, I think walking would be pleasanter than sitting still this warm evening."

She rose as she spoke, but I was so petrified with my discovery that she spoke English so fluently, and so mortified over my needless attempt at French, that instead of offering her my arm I stood stock still and looked at her.

"Why did you not tell me long ago that you spoke English?" I blurted out.

She was not offended at my bluffness; she only smiled.

"I do not think Sir Lionel has ever given me a chance to tell him anything," she said in that adorable voice of hers, where now I could detect the merry gurgling of a brook over a pebbly bed mingled with the song of thrushes. "Your French speech was the first you have ever addressed to me."

That was true, although I had held so many imaginary conversations with her that I did not for the moment think it was. I offered her my arm for the promenade and she started to accept it naturally. But with her hand half extended she dropped it quickly, as if some sudden thought had struck her.

"Oh, I do not think I need your arm," she said with a bright blush; "I'm a fine sailor; see how steadily I walk."

And so she did, keeping her balance perfectly when the ship slid down into the trough with the deck at an angle of forty-five degrees (for though there was no storm on a heavy sea was rolling) and mounting the deck just as steadily when the good ship was climbing up again.

I have often thought of that first talk with her — I thought of it many times in the light of the strange events that followed — for I had never met in England any young woman who talked so well as this young Frenchwoman. Of course the one topic on all our tongues was the war with France, but she understood so well all the *casus belli*. I could never have expected a woman, and a young one, to have been so well informed. More than that, she was no lover of the great Bonaparte, and I suspected there was good reason for that. We had decided, the American and I, that she was of the old régime, probably an emigrée of noble blood, seeking a more congenial clime in America.

But we did not always talk of the war. I had ever a fondness for quoting my Shakespeare — which I can see now was often a bore to Peggy, who would rather have been talking of her triumphs on the stage and off, or of the things she liked most to eat and to wear. Indeed, as I have grown older, I can see that one might easily make himself tiresome by having too ready a tongue for a quotation — that it is a bad habit, to be curbed, not cultivated — but then I was in love with my Shakespeare as I was in love with love, because I was a sentimental young idiot who had still his wisdom teeth to cut.

Being tempted, therefore, by the beauty of the night I began:

"Look, how the floor of heaven
Is thick inlaid with patines of bright gold."

To my delight she took the word out of my mouth and finished it for me:

"There's not the smallest orb which thou beholdest
But in his motion like an angel sings,
Still quiring to the young-eyed cherubim."

And then we got into a great game of capping verses, she beginning a quotation and I finishing it, or I beginning and she finishing. She was better at it than I, which was sufficiently surprising to me then, since I had not known many young Englishwomen who loved their Shakespeare, and she, being French, could easily have been excused from loving him or comprehending his beauty — but, as I said before, in the light of what followed it was infinitely more surprising.

In the midst of our keenest delight in this intellectual game (my delight, at least, was keen, I cannot answer for Miss Desloge's) she suddenly seemed to recollect something. Her manner, which had been natural, unembarrassed and altogether charming, turned to the most frigid formality.

"You must excuse me, Sir Lionel; it is growing late, I fear," she said formally. "I must go to my cabin, but I will not trespass on your courtesy further — I can find my way alone. Good-night, sir."

And without giving me a chance to urge that it was still early, or to insist upon accompanying her to the companionway — both of which I was eager to do — she was off.

Only once again on the voyage did I have anything like an uninterrupted conversation with her, and that was about a week before we landed. In the interval it had seemed to me that she had studiously avoided me. Sometimes she was at the table, sometimes she was not, but when she was there most of her conversation was addressed to the captain and the American, and usually it was in French; which, though of course it was the more natural tongue for her to speak, yet now that I knew she spoke such pure and fluent English I could not but consider as intended as a direct slight to me. I ought to have resented it, I suppose, and paid her as little attention as she paid me, but there was something in her manner of treating me that piqued my interest against my will. Sometimes I thought it possible that it was one of her French wiles, intended to pique it, but when, as occasionally happened, she turned and addressed me in English, her manner was so serious, so frank and direct, and at the same time so indifferent, as to preclude all thoughts of coquetry on her part. I had to confess to myself that it was much more probable that she was interested in the big American — who was a man to attract any woman, even at the first glance — and thought of me not at all.

Away from the table I seldom saw her, and then only in the presence of others, but on this evening, about a week before our landing — to be exact, just six days before — I saw her as I came out from supper, sitting far out in the bow of the vessel, watching the sunset toward which we were rushing with every sail full set. And she was alone.

I had such a vivid recollection of the one delightful hour I had spent with her, and I had so keen a realization of the fact that our voyage was nearly over, that I took my courage in my hand and walked straight out into the bow beside her. She was so intent on the sunset, and the swish of the waves, flung back from our swift prow, was so strong, that at first she neither saw nor heard me, and I stood beside her a full minute looking at her, unperceived. I had seen her face merry, and formal, and cold, and eager, but I had never before seen it sad, and her eyes were of the kind which sadness but made the more beautiful. No doubt while she was looking at that piled glory of crimson and gold in the west, she was thinking of home and friends. For a moment I felt that I ought to turn and leave her to her sad thoughts undisturbed. Then I said to myself — She has had many hours alone, devoted to sorrowful reveries, no doubt; this one hour I think she might spare to a fellow traveler who is also sad. So I made known my presence to her.

"Mademoiselle," I said flippantly, "art sitting in 'maiden meditation, fancy free'?"

She was startled at the sound of my voice and looked up quickly with a half-frightened glance. Without giving her a chance to speak I went on:

"Will you share your sunset with a fellow voyager who is almost a stranger? — or, so you have made him feel."

What induced me to address her with such impertinence I cannot tell, but she did not resent it. She smiled more sweetly than I had heretofore seen her smile on me and with something of that merry little twinkle in her eye that had made me think, on the night I met her, that she was trying to coquette with me, and that once more reminded me so strongly of someone I had known — Peggy, no doubt.

She was sitting on a wide coil of rope and she moved a little to one side as she answered me:

"I will not only share my sunset, but my seat, Sir Lionel; will you sit down?"

I had been impertinent once and it had answered well — I would try it again.

"Miss Desloge," I said, as I thanked her and took the seat she offered me beside her, "it seems to me that you have purposely avoided me, and I know not why. Did I offend you in our last conversation together?"

She hesitated before replying, and as I watched her, not being quite sure how she would take so bold a speech from so great a stranger, I saw the faint color come and go in her cheek and I thought she was struggling with some half-formed purpose. She turned to me, finally, with the air of one who has come to a decision, and as she spoke the rose still palpitated in her cheek.

"No, Sir Lionel," she said, with serious sweetness, "you did not offend me. I enjoyed our hour together; and if it had been proper and you had so desired, I could have enjoyed many more like it, on this tedious voyage. I cannot tell you, or I do not wish to tell you, why it is not proper, but in a few days you will inevitably know, and then you will thank me that I have sacrificed my enjoyment of the passing hour to what I know to be right and fitting."

"Mademoiselle," I said quickly, sure now that she was some great lady whom I had no right to address on such familiar terms, "you know best what is right and fitting, but I should have thought on such a voyage as this — all of us fellow travelers together, and many of us, most like, leaving home for some sad cause that should make us feel akin — on such a voyage I should think that a princess might show friendliness even to a peasant."

She looked up at me, wonder at the hurt pride in my voice speaking from her soft eyes. But in a moment the wonder gave place to merriment.

"Oh," she said, with a gay little laugh, "you did not understand me at all. I am no princess; but never mind what I am — you will know soon enough — and I think for this evening it will not much matter if I forget it and let myself enjoy the society of my learned Shakespearean friend. Let us —

'Hold the world but as the world, Gratiano;
A stage, where every man must play a part;

And if, perchance, ours be sad ones, what care we for an hour! We will be

'As merry as the day is long.'"

She was delightful as she said it: red lips curling with saucy glee, dark eyes glowing and sparkling with merriment. I forgot even Peggy, in the hour that followed; I forgot that I had ever been sad.

I looked forward with eagerness to meeting her the next morning at breakfast, but she did not appear, and I did not see her again until, in the early dawn under rose leaf skies, and through a liquid air of sparkling amethyst, we sailed together over an opal sea up an enchanted bay to the tree-embowered village of New York.

V

THE LITTLE LION

"WHAT do you think of it, Sir Lionel?"

"It is wonderfully beautiful," I answered. "Why did no one ever tell me that I would find this new world so fair a land? It puts to shame our old Thames and the approach to London."

"I have never seen the Thames nor London," my companion answered, "but I can quite believe that this beautiful bay can put them both to shame. Certainly there is nothing in La Belle France to compare with it."

He spoke with a half-suppressed exultation that was easy to understand. The sun had not yet risen, but its rosy foreglow was in the sky and the clear light of dawn brought out the richly wooded heights on the west; and on the east, glimpses of white pillared houses on sloping lawns, and gardens and orchards heavily laden with the crimson globes of peaches or with fair round apples fast turning to scarlet and gold; and on either hand beautiful islands, between which, with every sail set and the foam rushing back from our prow, we were skimming like a great white-winged bird.

To be coming home to such a land after an absence of many months filled with strange adventures might easily give one an exultant thrill, I thought, and felt myself the sadder for the thought. For it was not my native shores I was approaching, and, beautiful as they were, to me they were to be the land of exile for the next two years. I had given my word to my father, and there was no more hope that he would voluntarily release me from my pledge than that I would ask it.

I glanced up into the face of my companion (he was a good half head taller than I) and I saw his dark blue eyes glowing with pride and love. But in a moment a shadow swept over them and he half turned away with a deep sigh.

I knew what the sigh meant. In our five weeks together we had gradually grown into a friendship that I believed would be as lasting as the hills, and would stand the shock of time as that rock we were just passing, and which they said was called Bedloe's Island, had resisted the onslaught of the waves for centuries. Five weeks may not be a long time in which to weld a friendship for life, but spent on shipboard, where there is nothing to do but to exchange, first, opinions, and later, confidences, it may easily be long enough; and if, by force of circumstance, two people are peculiarly ripe for such a friendship, then, indeed, might a much shorter time suffice.

But in the very act of sighing I saw his face change and that interested look come into his eyes that I had seen there before when they fell upon a certain person. I was very sure she must have come into his line of vision with the look, and I turned quickly to see, not with any intention of spying upon my companion. I knew he had no more reason for being specially interested in Miss Desloge than I, and he had just as much reason, perhaps more, than I, for being interested in no woman on this side of the globe. I turned quickly because I had caught no glimpse of her for nearly a week and we had both wondered, laughingly, at times, whether she might not have fallen overboard, so completely had she disappeared from table and deck.

Yes, there she stood: a graceful figure in a long gray silk traveling pelisse and wearing the same gray veil that had obscured those glorious eyes and that wonderful hair the first time I had seen her; for I had come, in my thoughts only, to use the adjective "glorious" concerning her eyes and hair, quite shamelessly of late, though at the beginning of our voyage I would have thought it treason to Peggy to do so.

She was standing by the taffrail gazing eagerly at each island and landmark as the captain, standing beside her (for a pilot was taking us up the bay and the captain was off duty), pointed them out to her. Most eagerly of all she was gazing at the rapidly approaching town lying just before us, its buildings coming out with startling distinctness in this wonderfully clear atmosphere, so unlike anything I had ever known on our mist-shrouded island.

I would have liked to go up and speak to her, but that I did not dare, for now that our ways were so soon to part, probably never to meet again, I had a curious sensation of regret and a mild chafing at fate, or at Miss Desloge, that I had succeeded in growing no better acquainted with her on this long voyage. I was therefore pleased to hear my companion say:

"Let us join them and listen to the captain's descriptions; he can tell you everything and show you everything much better than I. Philadelphia is my city, you know, not New York."

I was pleased, but I answered him jestingly:

"It seems to me for a young man with a broken heart you are showing great interest in the fair Frenchwoman."

He smiled, for he recognized that I was but repeating to him his own words, used to me a few days before, and with one accord we turned and walked toward Miss Desloge and the captain. She received us with less of embarrassment in her manner than she had yet shown.

"You are just in time," she said; "Captain Skinner knows every house and every spire and every tree on the island, I should think. See that pretty park and the fine houses facing it on the north? That is the Battery and Captain Skinner can tell you who lives in every house. Did you expect to see anything quite so fine in the wilderness, Sir Lionel?"

It was the first time she had ever voluntarily singled me out for direct address in the presence of others, and I felt myself coloring and stammering like an awkward schoolboy as I replied:

"Everything is much finer than I expected to see it, Mademoiselle. This approach to the town is magnificent. Is everything in the new world on so grand a scale, Captain Skinner?"

"Oh, well, I guess things are big enough over here, or if they 're not, we think they are and talk as if they were," he answered. "But there 's something ought to interest you, Sir Lionel. See that liberty pole?"

I was not quite sure what a liberty pole was, but he was pointing to a tall flagstaff in the park and I nodded.

"Well," said the captain, "in '83, on November 25th, when the Britishers marched out of New York and took ship for England, they greased that pole and left their flag flying at the top. It was a slick trick and they were sure the Americans would have to cut down the pole (and they knew it would go against the grain to do that, for they had set it up when they tore down King George's statoo and threw the tea into the harbor), but the Britishers thought they 'd either have to cut down the pole or leave the British colors flyin'."

The captain stopped to note the impression he had made, and Mademoiselle asked the question he wanted.

"Which did they do?"

"Neither, by gum!" said the captain grimly. "David Van Arsdale climbed the pole, grease and all, with our flag in his teeth, tore down the British flag and set ours flyin'."

"It was a fine feat," I said, and it was, for the pole was so tall and round and smooth, or so it looked through the captain's glass, that it would have been a difficult feat without any grease.

"Yes," said the captain with a brave assumption of carelessness. "The British were slick, and the pole was slick, but Davie was slicker still. That was twenty years ago, come next November, but every 25th of November since, either Davie or one of his sons has climbed that pole at sunrise and set the flag floatin' from it."

"How I would like to see him do it!" Mademoiselle exclaimed with enthusiasm.

"Mademoiselle Desloge," I challenged her, "if we are both in New York on the 25th of November, will you come down to the park with me at sunrise and see it done?"

"I do not expect to be in New York, Sir Lionel," she answered coldly, and at once became as impenetrable to me as she had been most of the time through the voyage, though to my companion and to the captain she was still sufficiently gracious.

I felt more chagrin at her sudden change of manner than I thought I ought to feel. What was Miss Dealoge to me! Why should I care how she treated me? I believed it was the mystery that enshrouded her that had aroused my interest, but had I not cares and sorrows enough of my own to absorb me to the exclusion of any curiosity about or interest in the possible troubles of another? I was turning on my heel, determined to leave Miss Dealoge and her vicinity, when the captain spoke to me again.

"There's another interesting spot to you Britishers, Sir Lionel. Take my glass and examine the iron railin' around that little green up there beyond the park. Do you see anything peculiar about it?"

"It's a pretty little green and a fine railing," I answered after gazing through the glass a moment, "but I see nothing peculiar, except that the top of every post is ragged — looks as if it were broken."

"That's it!" exclaimed the captain, giving his leg a resounding whack, as was his custom when at all excited. "I helped break them tops off myself when I was a lad of twenty. King George's statoo was in the middle of the green, and we broke up the statoo and sent the pieces to Connecticut to be melted into bullets; for by good luck the old king was made of lead, and many a one of his sojers did his own statoo send to Davy Jones's locker. Then we broke off the tops of the posts 'cause they were gilt crowns, and we wanted no crowns or kings in Ameriky. But, by gum!" he added with sudden remorse, "I never meant to be crowin' over a fallen foe. You must excuse me, Sir Linel, I forgot fer a minute."

I laughed, and so did Mademoiselle, and so did the big American, for the good captain's manner was such a mixture of comical repentance and sly bravado as was irresistible. He joined in the laugh himself, after a moment, with so joyous a guffaw as made us all but laugh the harder. But we were slipping past the Battery and I had supposed we would land there. When I said so to the captain:

"Oh, no," he answered, "we land at the foot of Wall Street, round the heel of the island. See that tall spire? That 's Trinity Church and it stands at the head of Wall Street, where it runs into Broadway. It 's a very nice church, not quite as big as St. Paul's, nor so fine as Westminster, but a very nice church if you 're a Peskypisky and like all the folderol they use there on Sundays. I 'm a Congregationalist, myself, when I 'm to hum."

We were running so close to shore now that he could point out without the aid of his glass the fine houses of which there were a goodly number around the parks and on Wall Street and the streets running into Wall, and tell us who lived in them. They were substantial dwellings, and would have compared well with any of our fine London houses, except a few of the great houses of our upper peers. As we came quite round the "heel," and began to draw up toward our landing, the captain pointed out a large square brick building three stories high, with stone trimmings, and a sloping roof in which were set dormer windows.

"That 's Fraunces' Tavern," the captain said, "where General Washington told his officers good-by ten days after the British sailed. There were a lot of them around the table in the big room in the second story and folks said there wa'n't a dry eye among them when he told 'em good-by. And do you see that spot in the roof where the shingles are a different color?" the loquacious captain went on. "Well, that's where the first British cannon-ball struck New York from the big ship *Asia*. Did you ever hear Mr. Fraunces' potry 'bout that very hole in the roof, sir?" turning to the big American.

No, he had never heard it, and the captain rolled it glibly from the tip of his tongue, glad of a chance to show himself a man of letters:

"'Scarce a broadside was ended till 'nother began again,
By Jove! it was nothing but Fire away, Flanagan!
Some thought him saluting his Sallys and Nancys,
Till he drove a round shot through the roof of Sam Fraunces.'

"But, by gum, we 're almost at the landin' and here have I been standin' palaverin' with the quality when I should a bin attendin' to my dooty."

With that he was off and left us three together and I at least would have been embarrassed at having Mademoiselle Desloge left on our hands, as it were, but that we were drawing near the wharf and were all greatly excited at the prospect of so soon making a landing after five weeks of the sea, and greatly absorbed, also, in observing the people who were thronging the pier watching the great ship come in. There were some fine ladies among the throng, dressed more after the Parisian style than our clumsier English fashion, and carrying themselves as proudly as titled dames. Some of them were beautiful, too, though I know not why that should have surprised me, for I had often heard that the American women were beautiful. I was wondering idly if any of them could be Livingstons, for it was to the Livingstons I was accredited, when I observed a strange thing: every face before me was more or less sad, and many of the throng were dressed in mourning. Down the faces of some, tears were streaming and there was scarcely a smile to be seen except when a fleeting one greeted the first sight of a friend on the ship's deck. I could hear all around me, from those who had now pressed close about us, struggling to catch a glimpse of friends on shore, murmurs over the strangeness of the scene, and a sort of awed silence fell upon us on shipboard, as we grew more and more assured that tidings of some great calamity awaited our landing.

In the midst of our surmises I noticed a little man come quickly through the throng. He was very small, quite under middle size, but he was evidently a man of distinction, for the throng gave way before him and men saluted and women curtsied deeply, and I could see, even at this distance, that the sadness in many eyes had given away for the moment to looks of love and admiration, and I looked at him curiously.

Though he was so small I have never seen dignity more fully expressed in carriage and movement. His head was finely shaped and massive, without seeming at all out of proportion to his figure, which was of extreme elegance, well and lithely built. His nose was long and rather sharp, his mouth close-set, and his jaw strong and firm. But it was his eyes that were remarkable. Dark and deeply set, they were more full of light than any eyes I had ever seen. They absolutely seemed to radiate beams of light as they were turned up towards our captain, and I could easily fancy that at times they might flash fire.

But I had only a moment to take in all these points, for as he fully emerged from the throng, he stepped to the edge of the wharf and called across the rapidly narrowing strip of water to our captain; and at his words I was for a moment struck to stone with astonishment.

"Captain Skinner," he called, in a voice whose rare musical quality I noted with wonder, since most American voices were not musical to my ears, "Captain Skinner, Mr. Livingston is ill and has asked me to call for Miss Livingston's maid, a Mademoiselle Desloge. Will you be so good as to find her for me?"

When the first moment of stunned astonishment at his words had passed, I would not look at Miss Desloge, lest I embarrass her, but I could not refrain from a glance at the big American standing at my side, to see how he took the revelation that this beautiful young woman whom we had both concluded from her air must be at least a duchess in disguise was but a maid, and in service to Miss Livingston. To my surprise he seemed not even to have heard the words. His eyes were glowing, his whole face was irradiated with some strong inner feeling or combination of feelings, where love and admiration shone paramount. In a low and suppressed voice, as one awe-struck, he whispered:

"Did you see him? It's the Little Lion! It's Hamilton himself!"

VI

PESTILENCE AND STORM GREET MY ARRIVAL

IT took some time to get our big boat alongside the wharf and safely moored there with dropped anchors and strong cables over the pier heads, and while the sailors were bringing the great ship to with much shouting and weird chanting, after the manner of sailors, I stole a glance at Mademoiselle Desloge. Her cheek was burning, as I had expected to find it, but when, feeling my eyes on her, no doubt, she turned quickly toward me, there was in her glance neither overwhelming confusion nor pained embarrassment, both of which I had dreaded to meet. Indeed, I could not be quite sure what her expression meant, and I fear the confusion and embarrassment were mine, when she said in a tone so low that in all the bustle about us no one else could hear:

"Did I not tell you it was neither right nor fitting, Sir Lionel?"

Was that a teasing smile that for a moment curled her scarlet lips? Was that a saucy twinkle in her glorious dark eyes? And was she laughing at my discomfiture? I answered her with dignity:

"If I can be of any assistance to Mademoiselle Desloge in disembarking I hope she will command me; it is at least as right and fitting for me to offer her my services as for the great Hamilton."

She did not answer but turned quickly away to hide some emotion, for the glimpse of her cheek turned from me, the slender neck and daintily set ear, were all a rosy red, but whether from distress or merriment I could not be sure.

And what cared I which it was, I said to myself indignantly. What mattered to me the vagaries of a French lady's maid, born coquette and practised in the wiles of coquetry? and I turned once more to watch the preparations for landing. The cables had been caught and the nooses slipped over the pier heads and now the great windlasses were turning and with much noise of creaking and grinding we were drawing steadily to the wharf. In a moment more the gang-plank was shoved out and those standing ready with their bags and bundles in their hands rushed across and were received with open arms by waiting friends.

Neither the American nor Miss Desloge nor I had been among these. The American was waiting to superintend the disembarking of his great horse, Bourbon Prince; Miss Desloge was waiting for Mr. Hamilton to come on board after her (which seemed to me to savor somewhat of presumption toward the great statesman on the part of a lady's maid), and I knew not for what I was waiting. For now that I was to leave the friendly ship and set foot on a foreign soil — none too friendly, I knew, to a Briton — my heart sank within me, and, but for my word to my father, I should have liked to keep my quarters on shipboard and go back with the jolly captain on his return voyage. Mr. Hamilton's words, "Mr. Livingston is ill," had struck painfully on my ears for more reasons than one. Was this my Mr. Livingston, the one to whom I was accredited? who had sent me such cordial letters of invitation to come at once to his house on landing? And if he were ill, why had he not also sent Mr. Hamilton for me? Was I not of as much consequence as a lady's maid?

But I did not long indulge in this childish and pettish humor. I took thought with myself that I had been sent abroad for the avowed purpose of learning self-reliance and independence; in less than two years I should have reached man's legal estate. Let me show myself already a man in determination and courage, if not quite one in years.

By this time Mr. Hamilton had wedged his way through the pushing throng across the gang-plank and, directed by the captain, was now approaching us. I watched him curiously. I intended to observe his manner toward Miss Desloge; possibly in this land of liberty, lady's maids were on equal terms with ladies. If it should prove so, I would be genuinely glad for Miss Desloge's sake, for lady's maid or not, I had found her a young woman of brilliant intellect and fine accomplishments, and I did not doubt she had been reduced to service by the exigencies of the Revolution and the Terror.

But before he had a chance to address Miss Desloge he had discovered the big American and greeted him most cordially. I saw my friend flush with pleasure as he bent low before him, and I was struck by the fact that Mr. Hamilton, small and dark, lost nothing in dignity as he received the respectful salutations of the big blond American, who towered nearly head and shoulders above him. It pleased me to see it, for I am rather small and somewhat swarthy myself, both of which facts have at times been a source of trial to me, who admire my fair countrymen and regard inches, in both height and breadth, as one of the first requisites to manliness. It pleased me, because I determined on the spot that, though I could never be a great man like Hamilton, yet I might hope to be looked up to by my fellows, since it seemed inches had little to do with merit and renown.

But though I could not but feel a keen curiosity in watching so great a man at such close range I was nervously interested in Miss Desloge's fate — what courtesy would be accorded her, whether scant or sufficient — and involuntarily my glance fell swiftly on Miss Desloge as I saw Mr. Hamilton turn toward her. To my surprise it was myself, not Mr. Hamilton she was regarding, and as my eyes met hers she spoke hastily as if she had been watching for this opportunity:

"Sir Lionel, I hope you will let me thank you for your courtesy to a stranger, and will not think me bold when I say not 'farewell' but 'au revoir.'"

I felt awkward and uncertain how to reply to this speech, uttered very seriously and sweetly, and which, if she had but been a young lady in my own class of life, might easily have set all my pulses to fluttering and the red blood rushing to my face. But she gave me no chance to decide what to say or how to say it, for at the last word she turned quickly and, Mr. Hamilton being close beside her now, I saw him extend his hand, and without the slightest condescension in voice or face, say courteously:

"Mademoiselle Desloge, I believe? Then I am to take you in charge. You will come with me to the Grange, where you will stay until other arrangements are made for you. Mr. Livingston is ill with yellow fever."

"Yellow fever!" I exclaimed involuntarily, and "Yellow fever!" Miss Desloge and the American echoed in concert.

I could see Miss Desloge pale as she spoke, and I had no doubt the horror I had always felt of any plague, but most of all of this one which was the dread scourge of the new country, of which I had read much and heard many grewsome tales — I had no doubt this horror betrayed itself in my voice and in my countenance.

"Yes," answered Mr. Hamilton, "our city is once more devastated by the scourge. Mayor Livingston has been untiring in his devotion to the sick until he has at length himself fallen a victim, and though I have not of late years been a political friend to the Livingstons, as you know," turning to the American, "yet there is no man in the city, friend or foe, who would not do his utmost now to serve the great and good Livingston, who has not spared himself in serving others."

This, then, was the cause of all those signs of woe we had noted in the people gathered on the wharf. A doomed city! It seemed to me as I looked off over its clustering houses, tree-embowered, and the spire of Trinity Church catching the first rays of the sun rising at our backs, that I could see a visible pall descending upon it, and such trembling horror seized me as I had never yet experienced. Had it been a horde of savages descending on the doomed city I would have been the first to seize my sword and rush to meet them, I was sure, for I have never thought myself a coward, but this was the kind of foe with whom I had no weapons to contend, and whose very name struck unreasoning terror to my heart.

I could not discover any signs of terror in the American.

He bore himself very steadily in face of the appalling tidings, and his first thought seemed to be not for himself but for me.

"You must go home with me, Sir Lionel," he said earnestly. "I cannot give you the kind of welcome I should like to, for it may be to a house of mourning I am taking you, but at least it will be a safe refuge."

"No, not to a house of mourning," interposed Mr. Hamilton quickly. "How could I have been so thoughtless as not to have given you my tidings at once! Your father is still living, and my last reports are that he is even gaining a little. It was 'a stroke,' you know?"

I do not think he had known until this moment what had been the nature of his father's illness, and the suddenness of the information, together with the assurance that his father still lived, was too much for the steady-nerved fellow, whose calmness had sometimes seemed to me to border on the phlegmatic. He turned away to hide his weakness, and Mr. Hamilton addressed me directly:

"Do I understand you to be Sir Lionel Marchmont? Mr. Livingston was not expecting you on this boat and now his house is no place for you — you must come with me to the Grange."

Here was American hospitality indeed. Two invitations within a minute and both of them offered so heartily it was evident they were no mere matter of form. But I was not going to accept either of them. Such kindness to a stranger could be little less than charity; and though both my would-be hosts urged their hospitality with such vehemence that declining it began to be an embarrassment, I steadfastly persisted in my purpose to find an inn of some kind; and the American, seeing that I was determined, said he would go with me to the City Tavern, where he might have to delay for a day if the stage to Philadelphia should not be going and if he could find no private conveyance, for, after the long sea voyage, Bourbon would be in no condition to start at once on such a journey. Whereupon Mr. Hamilton invited us both to dinner at the Grange, an invitation which I accepted at once, with pleasure, and the American conditionally.

To put one's feet on terra firma after five weeks on a rolling, pitching or sliding deck, as the case might be, is a curious sensation. I had experienced no qualms of seasickness on shipboard, but now I found my head spinning and my limbs staggering under me. My big friend seemed to feel no such inconvenience, but seeing my plight he called a pony-chair, evidently waiting to be hired, and directed the black in charge to drive me at once to the City Tavern, while he stayed to look after his horse and his two negroes, Cæsar and Chloe.

"Gwine to de City Tabern, Marse Cap'n?" asked the black as he put my bag at my feet.

There was no resisting his mellow tones and his cordial grin. I had felt half afraid of him at first, being totally unused to negroes, but now I resigned myself comfortably to his care and he proved himself a most loquacious guide as well as a skillful Jehu.

It was a dismal drive; for though it was along a street finer than I could have hoped to find in this new world, with handsome residences solidly built of brick and stone lining both sides of it, and heavily shaded with some of the finest elms I had ever seen and with a species of maple entirely new to me and very beautiful, yet the handsome houses were most of them closed with heavily barred shutters of wood, and the street itself was almost deserted, and so silent that my light pony-chair, rattling over its stones, waked hollow echoes from the empty dwellings frowning silently down on us.

My garrulous guide told me that this was Wall Street and pointed out the remains of the old wall from which it took its name, built to protect the village from the savages in an earlier day. He knew, also, who dwelt in every house and uttered their names with pompous pride as if I would recognize them at once as those of men of note, but most of them were unfamiliar to my ears and made little impression upon me. Moreover, he volunteered an explanation of the closed houses. In this one, three members of the family had died of the scourge;

from the next, the household had fled early to their country seat on the Bloomingdale Road in the upper part of the island; in the third, the bride of a week had been stricken down and the frantic young husband had been carried out a raving maniac and confined for safe keeping in the Bridewell.

They were grewsome tales but there was no stopping the black, who seemed to gloat over the telling of them, rolling his eyes in ghoulish delight. Moreover, the air was heavy with the stench of burning gunpowder and vinegar and garlic which yet could not entirely disguise the more offensive odor they were intended to cover. It was the hour of the day when the air should have been drenched with dew, and sweet and cool with the freshness of the early morning, but, though the sun had hardly risen, it was already glowering at us like a ball of fire through thick and poisonous vapors which seemed to steam up from the very earth itself. My heart was sick within me; a hundred times in the course of that short drive I wished myself back in the fair green meadows of my native Devonshire, breathing its cool fresh air, swept clean and sweet by ocean breezes.

Before an imposing building with pillared porch and sculptured pediment and metopes, my sable Jehu drew up a moment.

"De Federal building, sah," he said with infinite pride. And then waving his hand toward an upper balcony:

"In dat sacred spot, sah, Marse George Washington stood when he tuk de oath of office as fust Pres'dent ob de United States."

The air of pride with which he rolled this majestic sentence between his teeth was delicious. I glanced up at the balcony with real interest. Then he had trod these very streets! Over the narrow brick sidewalk in front of the stately building his feet had often passed! I had come three years too late to see, take him all in all, the greatest man the world had ever known, but I could visit the scenes of his exploits; I would, without doubt, meet the men who had known him well; indeed, this very afternoon I was to dine with the man whom he had dearly loved and delighted to honor. For the moment my *mal-de-terre,* my home-sickness, my horror of this scourge-infected air were all forgotten. And then from the spire of the church standing at the head of the street, a bell began to toll the death knell.

There was a sudden commotion before a house a few doors down on a street opening just where we stood into the one we were traversing. I glanced down the street. A rough cart had drawn up before a handsome house; a half dozen negroes with shouts and loud commands and much unseemly noise were carrying a rude box with its heavy burden out of the house, followed by a woman, shrieking, whom some men were evidently trying to soothe and restrain. The blacks deposited the box unceremoniously in the cart and drove off rapidly down the street, careless of the jolting box beside them and of the shrieking woman left behind. Two of the men, who had been trying to comfort her, sprang upon waiting horses and spurred them into a gallop to overtake the cart, and the remaining two forced the frantic woman with gentle violence back into the house. And through it all the bell of Trinity tolled dismally.

I had been spellbound by the horrible scene nor could I shake off the spell until the woman had disappeared within her doors.

"Go on!" I said sharply, rousing myself, and the black, with rolling eyes half starting from his head, and showing all the white, whipped up his horse and in a moment we had reached the head of the street, turned to the right in front of Trinity Church with its bells still dismally tolling in its high spire, and just beyond the church drew up in front of a great hostelry.

My head was still going around and my knees very uncertain, and strange qualms in the region of my stomach forbade the thought of eating or drinking and I tarried only long enough in the crowded office, thronged with passengers from the *Sea Gull*, to get a room assigned me to which I was conducted by another black boy — of whom there seemed to be legions swarming about the inn.

My room proved to be comfortable enough, and clean, I was glad to discover. The boy put down my hand luggage and disappeared, but reappeared in a moment with a pitcher of fresh drinking water which he assured me gravely was from "the tea-water pump." What difference that made I did not know then, though I learned later that the water from this famous pump was regarded as the only perfectly safe drinking water on the island, and that, no doubt, the city owed its frequent scourges of yellow fever to the general impurity of its wells. It was deliciously cool and refreshing; I quaffed a glass of it eagerly and turned to the window to see if I could find a breath of air stirring, for with both windows open my room was yet insufferably hot and close.

But I found no relief at the window. I looked out on a broad thoroughfare lined with trees from which every leaf hung drooping and lifeless. Milkmen were going about the street with great cans of milk suspended from yokes slung about their shoulders, but their cries of "Milk, ho, Milk!" sounded listless and half-hearted through the heavy air, and the call of a solitary vendor of "pure cold water from the tea-water pump," bearing enormous cans after the fashion of the milkmen, was no more cheery or inspiring. The hour was early, but not so early that it could account for the deserted aspect of the principal thoroughfare of the town, as I had been informed "the Broadway" was; no doubt the scourge was responsible, and I fell to bemoaning once more a fate that had cast me upon these shores at such an untoward moment.

I had not observed that the skies had been growing darker, but at a sound of low and distant rumbling I glanced up and discovered heavy thunderheads rapidly moving up from the southwest, and in a few moments there burst upon the pest-ridden city the most terrific storm I had ever witnessed, accompanied by a sudden clash and roar of wind that seized the listless trees and bent and twisted them into writhing shapes, and tore off great limbs and sent tiles from roofs and chimneys flying through the air. My windows faced the east so that I could keep them open without being exposed to the violence of the wind and rain which was driving in solid walls of water across the island to the accompaniment of an incessant roar of thunder, interrupted by tremendous crashes and sudden and blinding flashes of lightning.

It was a magnificent spectacle but it was all over in fifteen minutes. The storm cleared away as rapidly as it had arisen, leaving the air wonderfully freshened and cleared from the noisome vapors of the morning.

"'T is a strange land," I said to myself, "where the morning hours are hotter than England's noondays, and where its refreshing showers take the form of tropical tornadoes."

I was still giddy and headachy and in no mood for breakfast, and wondering idly what had become of my friend, the big American, through the violence of the storm, but quite sure that he was well able to take care of himself, I pulled off my boots and coat and threw myself on the inviting-looking bed for a few moments' rest until the American should make his appearance. I did not intend to go to sleep, and, for the first few moments, a great wave of longing for home and Peggy engulfed me. Yes, Peggy, of whom I had thought but little of late, the Peggy I had known in dear old Oxford; a Peggy, that I knew now had never had any real existence, but for whom in my homesick thoughts I still miserably longed.

And then, suddenly, without warning, sleep descended like a pall and wrapped my senses in a heavy, dreamless slumber.

VII

I MEET A WIT

I WAS roused by a vigorous grip of my shoulder. Through my dulled senses, still dazed by my heavy sleep, I heard an energetic voice:

"Come, you have slept long enough; it is time to be dressing for dinner!"

I opened my eyes slowly and looked into the smiling eyes of my big American bending above me. For a moment I could not recall myself to my surroundings, for, if most of my slumber had been dreamless, the latter part of it had been crowded with visions in which the face and form of Mademoiselle Desloge, promenading the ship's deck beside me on a stormy ocean, galloping with me through the sweet Devonshire lanes, bending over me as nurse and guardian while I lay dying of the terrible yellow scourge, had been most persistent.

"Where am I? Where did you come from? What time is it?" I asked, all in a breath, as I struggled to my feet and began to throw off my lethargy.

"It's nearly two o'clock and we are to dine at the Grange at four. I have been in here a dozen times through the morning but you were sleeping so soundly I had n't the heart to disturb you. Now you will have barely time to dress and take a bite of breakfast, which I have ordered to your rooms. We must be off by half past two."

There was a knock at the door as he finished speaking and one of the innumerable black Mercurys entered bearing a tray whose appetizing odors convinced me at the same moment that my long sleep had effectually cured me of my land-illness and that I was as hungry as a bear. It was a breakfast for two and as we sat about the little table the black boy deftly spread for us, devouring, with the relish of hungry men, good land food, such as our five weeks on the sea had made us strangers to, the American explained his arrangements for the afternoon. He had ordered a curricle, since we would arrive in better shape for dinner by curricle than by horse, and it would be at the door in three-quarters of an hour — could I be ready?

I was ready, and though I did not cut so fine a figure as the American — who would have outshone all other men had he been dressed in rags, and in his fine Parisian clothes was a figure indeed — though I could not hope to rival him in my personal appearance, I was quite satisfied with myself, since I had donned my best, and, being something of a philosopher in those days, I resolved to think no more of my looks but be free to enjoy to the best of my ability whatever pleasant things were in store for me.

Bowling along at a lively pace over a country road where every atom of dust had been laid, and the heavy foliage of the overhanging trees had been washed crisp and shining by the tremendous downpour of the morning, we came to a great country place just as a carriage drawn by a pair of spirited horses rolled through the gates. Leaning back among the cushions of the carriage was a very striking-looking young woman — I hardly knew whether or not to call her beautiful — and by her side was a young man whose glowing eyes and air of devotion, noticeable even to the passing glance, betrayed his interest in his companion.

"It must be Theodosia Burr," said the American in a low tone, as he drew to one side to give the road to the carriage. The gentleman lifted his hat and the lady bowed slightly in acknowledgment of the courtesy, and I was struck with the exceeding beauty of the smile that accompanied the bow. I was also impressed by the air of distinction in the man, a young fellow about my own age.

"A goodly pair," I answered, "but who is Theodosia Burr, and who is the young man so openly in love with her?"

"I don't know the man," said my friend, "nor, indeed, do I know Miss Burr. But I am quite sure it is she, and the man is, no doubt, one of the many reputed victims of her charms."

"But who is Miss Burr?" I persisted. "She is certainly endowed with a fascinating smile."

"I beg your pardon," he apologized, "I could not have expected her fame to reach across the water, though we hear so much of her here. She is the daughter of our Vice-president, and this place we are passing is Richmond Hill, his home. It 's a famous old place and has had many famous occupants. Our first Vice-president, John Adams, lived here; early in the war it was Washington's headquarters and later it was the headquarters of your own army under Sir Guy Carleton."

I looked off with keen interest to where at a distance, across park-like grounds, the chimneys and roofs of a great house were visible among the trees.

"Washington and Carleton!" I exclaimed. "It is a beautiful place, and I should much like to see it at closer range since it has been headquarters for two such distinguished soldiers."

"Doubtless you will. Mr. Burr is no friend of Mr. Hamilton's politically, but there has never been any rupture socially, I believe, and his daughter is very warmly loved and admired by all the Hamiltons from the general down. I think it likely she is on her way to the Grange now and you will have the pleasure of dining with her and no doubt be invited to call."

I might have felt more excitement at the prospect of meeting the fascinating Theodosia but that with every roll of the wheels bearing us smoothly along this picturesque country road I was growing, unaccountably, more and more nervous with the persistent conjecture as to whether or no I was also likely to meet Miss Desloge — and, if I did meet her, how I was to conduct myself in her presence. Mr. Hamilton's manner to her made it seem quite possible that here in America she would be honored as a guest, instead of being treated as a servant. What if I should find myself seated beside her at table!

I hope that I was not quite the snob that my perturbation at this thought would seem to indicate me. Indeed, I could not explain to myself why I should be so disturbed or why I need find it difficult to treat her exactly as her host treated her, with the simple courtesy due any woman so situated — any lady, I might truthfully say of Miss Desloge.

Our road lay along the crest of a ridge for the greater part of the way, giving us frequent glimpses of a majestic river on our left, dotted with white sails. Across the river — which was here broad and more like an arm of the sea than like any river I had ever known — were rocky bluffs crowned with hanging woods. 'T was the Jersey shore, my companion told me, and across the river and across that state of Jersey lay his homeward road to Philadelphia.

We passed many other beautiful country places, and my friend, who seemed to know who lived in most of them, told me we were on the western side of that famous "fourteen mile round," Washington's favorite drive when he lived in New York as President. Not far beyond Richmond Hill we passed the gates of Mr. William Bayard's place. Looking up an avenue of elms I could see a pillared porch and I gazed at it, thinking it a very pleasant place, but with no thought that I should one day be standing on that porch with many others, tears running down our faces unheeded, while we waited breathlessly for news of the man within.

We passed through the quaint little village of Greenwich and a little farther on took a short cross-road to the right and came out on the Bloomingdale Road at the foot of a high hill covered with the wooded park of a gentleman's estate, and a fine house in the distance crowning the summit of the hill. The house was called Inclenburg and the hill Murray Hill, the American said, and drew up for a minute to show me how General Putnam's troops, guided by the young Aaron Burr in their retreat from the city, slipped by Murray Hill, while the British who had landed on the east side of the island at Kip's Bay, were resting in the Inclenburg woods, and Mrs. Murray, in the house, was feasting the officers and charming them with her gay wit into forgetfulness of their duty, so giving the Americans their chance to escape.

"My father has often told me," said the American, as he drew his long lash lightly across his horse's ears and we started on again at a lively pace, "that to Mrs. Murray, almost as much as to young Burr, belonged the honor of saving the army from falling into the hands of the British in their retreat from New York."

I was intensely interested in it all, for at Oxford, as we studied that American war, my heart had always been more on the side of the Pitts and young Charles Fox than with Lord North and the old King. And many a lively discussion had I had with old Hardwick, my tutor, who thought it treason to His Majesty to feel any sympathy with the colonies in their struggle for freedom.

Three miles beyond Inclenburg we came to another village which the Dutch had well named Bloomingdale, and from there on our road lay just above the great river, past the Apthorpe place with a finer mansion than any I had yet seen, which my friend said still belonged to the Apthorpes, who were "Tories" but took no part in the struggle. Then, through the quaint village of Manhattanville, and just where a road branched off to the right, to the still quainter village of Harlem, we began to climb Harlem Heights, where one of the first great battles of the war took place.

Talking thus of many things, some sober, some gay and deeply interested in them all, I was surprised at the shortness of the drive when, at a sudden turn, my friend drew up before a great gate and handing me the reins, sprang down, opened the gate and asked me to drive through, while I stupidly sat waiting for someone to run out from a porter's lodge.

There was no porter's lodge, nor, indeed, was there any park such as we have at home, but there were large grounds, beautifully rolling and heavily shaded, and a winding drive leading up to where the chimneys of a house showed in the distance. It was evidently a gentleman's place and I knew, of course, it must be the Grange, and began to feel some trepidation at the thought of meeting the great man and his family, which was not lessened by the sounds of laughter and the mingling of many voices as we drew nearer. We had been rolling through a long green lane, with soft turf under our horses' feet, and the trees so heavily arched over our heads as to make a semi-twilight, very grateful on the hot afternoon. Now, at a sudden turn, we came full upon the face of the house, and before it, scattered over a lawn shaded by tall trees, what seemed at the first glance a very large company indeed. The light dresses of the ladies made a confused blur of many colors in my eyes and I looked quickly away from them to where a group of four men, evidently just arrived, were talking to the great Hamilton himself. At the sound of our curricle wheels, Mr. Hamilton turned toward us, saluted us with a flashing smile, and at a word from him the group of men walked quickly toward us with the evident intention of giving us welcome. This seemed to me so different to our colder English fashion that I must needs feel myself color, greatly to my vexation, and when the curricle was brought to a standstill I fear I made an awkward figure alighting in the face of those smiling eyes and out-stretched hands.

In the confusion of presentations that followed the faces of two of the men graved themselves on my mind at the first glance, as if they were etched with steel, and they were the two I was destined later to know to my sorrow.

"This is Mr. Morris of Morrisania, Sir Lionel," Mr. Hamilton had said in presenting to me the handsomest man in the party, and when the greetings were over I turned to him.

"I met a Mr. Roger Morris from New York in London, Mr. Morris," I said, "but it was some years ago and I was but a lad, was that —"

"No relation, Sir Lionel!" Mr. Morris interrupted quickly, with a humorous shake of his head, implying horror at the thought. "Your Mr. Morris was a Tory and refused to take up arms against his sovereign, and I was a rebel, sir."

"This is Mr. Gouverneur Morris," Mr. Hamilton explained pleasantly, "at present our senator from New York in the Congress of the United States."

"And chiefly distinguished for his colossal impertinence," the other returned smilingly. "Mr. Troup came out to make me a visit at Morrisania and I suggested that we ride over to the Grange and invite ourselves to dinner. We met Mr. Burr and Mr. La Force at the gates and now Mr. Hamilton's dinner party is augumented by four unexpected guests. I am sure you are not so uncivilized in England."

I really thought we were not, but of course I could not say so, and one of the two men who had made such an impression on me at the first glance saved me the necessity of saying anything.

"Mr. Hamilton owes me a dinner," he said in a voice that reminded me of a river of oil flowing over deep waters, so smooth and rich was it in quality and pitched a good tone lower than the voices of the others. "He stole my daughter and he cannot expect me to dine alone. I met Mr. La Force by the Collect Pond on his way to call on Theodosia, and, knowing she was here, I did as Mr. Morris did, brought my guest with me. And if I did not demand dinner for us both the hint was sufficient for a gentleman of such well-known hospitality as Mr. Hamilton."

Not till he spoke of his daughter had I realized that this was the Vice-president of the United States, and although his face had already made a vivid impression upon me, I looked at him again eagerly — a slender boyish figure, features classically beautiful and a glowing dark eye that fascinated me in spite of a lurking gleam in its depths that I did not altogether like. He and Hamilton were not unlike, though Hamilton's face was the more beautiful and by far the more trustworthy, I said to myself, and the eyes franker and more genial.

It is possible Mr. Burr recognized that I had been attracted by him, for, as we all moved over toward the group of ladies under the elms, he fell back beside me and entered into a pleasant chat over the political situation at home, with which he seemed thoroughly familiar as, indeed, from his high position as Vice-president, I should have expected him to be. I could not pay as close attention or make as sensible replies as I might have done, had not every word uttered by either of us been bringing us a step nearer to that interesting group on the lawn among whom I looked in vain — and whether my feeling betook more of disappointment or of relief I could not be sure — for Mademoiselle Desloge.

A little lady, very charming but no longer young, separated herself from the group and came toward us:

"My dear Lloyd!" she exclaimed, both hands outstretched to the big American, "welcome home!"

Her face sparkled with animation and something very like affection as Lloyd bent low over her hand and, indeed, raised it to his lips, after the fashion he had learned, I suppose, in France. Without waiting for her husband to present me she turned to me and made me at home at once with her kindly greeting. She was dressed all in white except for a knot of black ribbon in the lace of her cap, which, I supposed, indicated mourning for someone, though I did not know until later that it was for the eldest son, killed in a duel two years before.

"Betty," said her husband, interrupting her pretty speeches to me, "here are four hungry men; can you give them something to eat?"

Mrs. Hamilton turned with a little French shrug, but also with a smile of real affection, to Mr. Morris:

"I have a great mind to send you and Mr. Troup back to Morrisania dinnerless. Why did you refuse to come yesterday, when we were all alone, and come to-day when you will be sure to monopolize the guests we want for ourselves?"

And then with a shade of reserve and a courtesy that was gracious yet somewhat stately, she turned to Mr. Burr:

"You are very welcome to our poor table, Mr. Burr, and any friend the Vice-president brings with him is welcome also. I am sure if fowl or pasty fall short you will make all due allowance."

As Mr. Burr presented Mr. La Force I saw to my amazement that he was a perfect stranger, thus shamelessly — so it seemed to me — thrust upon a dinner party. Yet none of the others seemed to think this remarkable, and I concluded it was the manner of the country. A moment later I found myself making my bow, first to the young lady of the house, Miss Angelica, whose name did not belie her looks; and then to the owner of that strangely fascinating face I had seen in the carriage, who proved to be, as Lloyd had supposed, Mr. Burr's daughter, but no longer Miss Burr, since she had been for a year the wife of a Mr. Alston of South Carolina and was now home on a visit to her father. She returned my bow with another of those enchanting smiles, though what struck me most was the look of adoration with which her face fairly glowed as her glance rested on her father.

There were two or three other young men and maidens whose names I did not easily distinguish, but I saw nowhere the young man we had met in the carriage with Mrs. Alston. As soon as possible after the introductions Mr. Hamilton drew me aside:

"A word in your ear, Sir Lionel, if you please," he said, and led me off with him toward a small shrubbery nearby.

"It seems," he began, as soon as we were out of ear-shot of the others, "that I made an unpardonable blunder this morning. I supposed, in good faith, that I was going to meet Miss Livingston's maid, but Miss Livingston herself, who arrived at noon on her father's sloop, is quite indignant at the suggestion. She says Mademoiselle Desloge is a paid *companion,* hired for the improvement of her French; that she is thoroughly respectable and that she intends to take her everywhere into society with her. She insists that she shall be presented at dinner this afternoon and she is at this moment waiting with Mademoiselle Desloge in the shrubbery until I shall have made this explanation to you. They insist on my making it, lest you should think that in this country we have ladies' maids at table with us. I cannot sufficiently regret such a discourtesy to Miss Deslodge"— and with that we turned the corner of the shrubbery and came flat upon two young ladies and two young gentlemen.

One of the young ladies, without doubt, was Miss Livingston, tall and with an air of distinction. She looked up quickly at the sound of our feet on the gravel, but the other did not seem to notice us, for the young man beside her was evidently telling her a capital tale, laughing hilariously at his own wit, and she, I noted jealously, too absorbed in the handsome young fellow to see an old acquaintance. It was the young man who had seemed so interested in Mrs. Alston in the carriage, and I made up my mind on the spot not to like him, since he was evidently of that light-headed class, taken with every new face, married or unmarried, if it be but a pretty one, and to whom women, even those who ought to know better, are always unaccountably attracted.

But while I was thinking these thoughts I was making my bow to Miss Livingston and taking a close scrutiny of her, since I was interested to know into what kind of hands Miss Desloge's future was to be entrusted. On the whole, I rather liked her. She was decidedly handsome, though she suffered a little in comparison with Miss Desloge's beauty, as every woman needs must. But it was the look of frank good nature in her eyes that pleased me most, and though I was soon to learn that she could be sarcastic when she chose, her sarcasm was of that comparatively mild type, not wholly inconsistent with amiability. But I was also soon to learn a thing which seemed far more incompatible with amiability than mild sarcasm, that Miss Livingston could be, to her dependents, haughty and imperious to a degree.

It had flashed through my mind that it was a strange thing to see her at a dinner party when her father was perhaps dying in the city with yellow fever, and I was relieved therefore when a few minutes later she said to me:

"You must not think me heartless, Sir Lionel. I was greatly vexed, on my arrival at noon, to find a party on hand, though Mrs. Hamilton assured me that it was not a party but a welcome home to a friend just returned from abroad, and to a friend of his arriving on the same ship, and that I need not feel I was showing any lack of concern in my uncle's illness by being present with the company. My father is still abroad, you know, but his sloop came down with one of my uncles aboard, hoping to find Uncle Edward well enough to be taken back to Clermont, and I took advantage of the opportunity to come with him to meet Miss Desloge, though I was only allowed to come on my solemn promise to go no nearer the city than the Grange."

"Oh!" I said stupidly, "then Mr. Edward Livingston is not your father?"

"Uncle Edward! Have you been thinking me so heartless as that! Uncle Edward is far too young a man to be my father — his children are not yet in their teens." And then she added, I thought with a little touch of pride, "I am the daughter of Mr. Robert Livingston, at present serving his country as Ambassador to the Republican court of France."

"Mr. Robert Livingston!" I exclaimed, glad of a bond to any person in this new, strange country. "Your father, then, is a friend of my father, and it is to him I am indebted for my letters of introduction in America and particularly for one to your Uncle Edward. I regret much to find him in such a sad state on my arrival."

I thought she blushed a little when I said that, though I could not guess why, and it was fully a year before I learned that I was correct in thinking she blushed, and learned also the reason for it.

But she rallied quickly from her discomfiture, if she felt any.

"I know now why you seemed like an old acquaintance when I met you," she said gayly. "You know my father, at least by proxy."

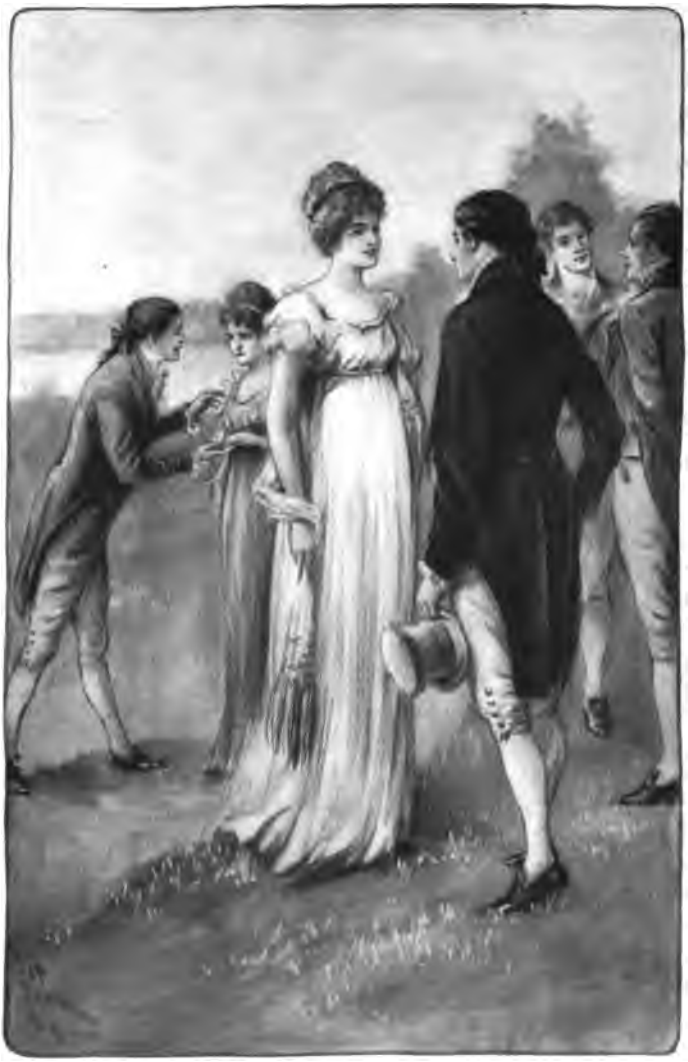
"And am a friend by proxy, also," I returned gallantly, "and shall therefore hope to be a friend of the daughter *in persona*."

Here the young man to whom she had been talking when we came up, and who had been presented in due course, broke in:

"I bid you beware, Sir Lionel. It is a dangerous thing to claim friendship with Miss Livingston; she puts it to some strange tests. I have thought for three years that I had a right to make that claim, but Miss Livingston has just convinced me that I have been over-presumptuous in so thinking."

I thought Miss Livingston looked a little vexed at that. She colored again and answered with something like asperity:

"Three years! Sir Lionel, you can see for yourself that three years ago Mr. Kemble was a mere lad, and I trust you can see that I was far too young to be thinking of friendships with lads."



"You know my father, at least by proxy"

Now I had been struck with the elegance of Mr. Kemble's appearance and the courtliness of his manner, for which I was hardly prepared in so new a country. I could see that he liked neither Miss Livingston's speech nor the manner of it, for he colored and bit his lip; but he said no word in reply, only bowed low and turned again to Mr. Hamilton, with whom he had been conversing.

All this time I had had no notice from Mademoiselle Desloge other than a slight nod, delivered carelessly between two smiles bestowed upon the man with whom, at some little distance, she was still conversing in a most particular manner, it seemed to me. Now I was to see the other phase of Miss Livingston.

"Mademoiselle Desloge," she called imperiously, "do you consider it good manners not to show any interest in a fellow ship-passenger? That may be courtesy in France; we do not so consider it in America."

I thought her irritation with Mr. Kemble must be responsible for such an astounding speech and I wondered if there had been a lovers' quarrel. Its effect on those hearing it was widely diverse. The man with whom Miss Desloge was talking stared for a moment at the speaker with round-eyed astonishment, then quickly dropped his eyes in embarrassment. Mr. Hamilton turned away and I did not see his face. A slight smile curled Mr. Kemble's lips — I could not read its meaning; perhaps it expressed, superciliously, a previous acquaintance with the strange moods of the speaker. I glanced at Mademoiselle Desloge. A wave of color deluged the milky whiteness of neck and brow, her eyes were on the ground, and as the man beside her, quickly recovering from his embarrassment, turned to her and gallantly offered her his arm, she moved slowly toward us, still with downcast eyes.

Hot with indignation at Miss Livingston, whom I had at first been inclined to like, I sprang eagerly to meet Mademoiselle Desloge and express my pleasure in the meeting. Miss Livingston cut short my eager words, with intentional rudeness, I believed.

"Allow me, Sir Lionel, to present to you Mr. Irving, Mr.

Washington Irving, the wit *par excellence* of New York society."

"Do not make me feel like a fool *par excellence*, I beg, Miss Livingston," he objected, which I thought showed better sense than I had given the fellow credit for. "I hope, Sir Lionel," he went on, "that when you know me, you will discover I am neither a wit nor a fool."

And then to Miss Desloge, with a smile which, I had to confess, lit up his handsome face radiantly, "You have not found me either the one or the other, have you, Mademoiselle?"

His smile was so gay and genial as he said it (though I thought his mouth too small and too beautifully formed for a man's, and his milk-white teeth too evenly set) he almost won my liking in spite of me.

"Certainly not the fool," Miss Desloge answered with a bewitching smile in return, "but I will not swear that I have not found you the other."

"Puppy! Coxcomb!" I muttered under my breath and mentally ground my teeth with rage.

VIII

THE SHADOW OF A COMING EVENT

NOW at Oxford, though I had kept up my prescribed reading sufficiently to pass the Schools, and even perhaps with some credit to myself, if the episode of Peggy had not prevented, yet there was another kind of reading that I delighted in more. I reveled in poetry, and there were three new poets over whom Oxford was greatly excited at that time — Mr. Wordsworth, Mr. Coleridge and Mr. Southey. There was a little company of us who devoured their poems as they appeared and who believed that no English poets, save only the immortal Shakespeare, had ever written anything greater than The Ancient Mariner or Thalaba the Destroyer. I had tried my hand at ballads in imitation of those sweet ones of Mr. Wordsworth, and, in my own estimation, I was not wholly unsuccessful in the art. Just before I left Oxford there had appeared a little volume of verses, "Lays of Border Minstrelsy," by a Mr. Scott, a Mr. Walter Scott whom nobody knew. Our little company, who had formed themselves into a society of criticism and censorship on all new literary productions, were greatly divided as to its merits. Most of them said it was nothing but a collection of jingles and not even purporting to be original with the author. As to their originality I could not say, but I contended they had caught the very spirit of border life, and as to the jingles I confessed to a sneaking liking for a jingle so long as it did not jangle. But I was greatly in the minority, and Peggy appearing on my horizon soon after, I forgot all about Mr. Walter Scott for the time, forsook my company of critics and betook myself to solitude and the fashioning of sonnets a la Mr. Shakespeare.

But poetry had not been my only delight. Any tale of love and romance found a ready entrance to my mind. Sir Charles Grandison, Pamela and Clarissa Harlowe, and the romantic tales of Mrs. Radcliffe, I eagerly devoured. But I loved even better the Italian tales of Mr. Boccaccio told in the Florentine villa by that gay company who had fled to the hills from the scourge-stricken city. Now all the while we were chattering under the trees waiting for Mrs. Hamilton's dinner to be announced, there was running through my head, almost unconsciously, a comparison between this gay company and the heartless ladies and gentlemen of the Decameron. It was something I was ill prepared for, to find Anglo-Saxons so coldly oblivious to the suffering of their neighbors, for not once, outside of Miss Livingston's explanation to me, was the subject of the scourge introduced. I wondered that these men, chivalrous and brave in their bearing, should not have emulated the good Livingston's example, whose devotion to his fellow-citizens, I understood, had laid him low, and I began to despise the courtly Kemble as a mere coxcomb, the gay and witty Irving as an idle trifler, and the distinguished Morris, Troup and Hamilton as selfish aristocrats.

But at dinner I changed my mind. I found that most of these men, all indeed except Mr. Burr and Mr. La Force, were members of a little company who were banded together for the nursing and care of the sick; that the company was divided into two groups, each nursing two days and resting two days; and that it was a matter of principle with them to spend their days of rest in such simple gayeties as might be found at the country-houses open to them, believing that thus they best preserved themselves in the proper physical condition for their work. My heart glowed within me when I gathered all this from their talk, and learned that on the morrow morning these men, so debonair, and some of them so courtly, would be hard at work in the worst stricken sections of the city, performing nauseous services for the sick and dying and dead. I turned to Mr. Irving, who was my near neighbor at table.

"You must admit me to your band," I demanded, "and set me to work at once. There must be enough work for another helper."

"More than enough," he responded courteously, "but I think it hardly safe for a foreigner, so newly arrived and wholly unused to our climate, to venture into the limits of contagion."

Miss Desloge had not heard my request to Mr. Irving, which had purposely been preferred in low tones but she heard his response, and looked up at me in a startled way that seemed half terror and which was the first sign of interest in me she had shown since my arrival at the Grange.

"I believe for that very reason I would be fever-proof," I insisted, "since I am not full of the poison which breeds the fever in your climate."

But Mr. Hamilton interposed:

"No, no, it would never do, Sir Lionel! Your father would never forgive us if we exposed you needlessly to the fever, and on your first arrival. Were Mr. Livingston, to whom you are accredited, and who, I suppose, would have some authority with you, in a condition to express his opinion, he would not listen to it for a minute."

"My father, sir," I urged respectfully, "would be the first to approve of my purpose. He has sent me here to learn self-reliance and how to conduct myself in all the affairs of life. I can fancy no better school than a scourge-stricken city, and no better training than the nursing of the sick."

Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Irving were still unconvinced, and the topic having become general there was universal protest raised against an unacclimated stranger subjecting himself to such needless peril. Mr. Hamilton appealed to my friend Lloyd to use his influence with me, and as I turned to him, I found his eyes on me and glowing with what I was sure was approbation.

"I think Sir Lionel is quite right," he said gravely. "It is a man's duty to help his fellow man whenever the occasion arises. I believe his father would have just cause to feel dissatisfaction with him should he refuse his help. If a higher duty did not call me home immediately, I should be proud indeed to share his service."

Mr. Hamilton shrugged his shoulders.

"I always knew you were quixotic, Lloyd," he said humorously. "Mademoiselle Desloge, you are a Frenchwoman, and therefore a woman of sense, and you are an entirely disinterested judge; I appeal to you."

To my surprise, Miss Desloge was very white, and it seemed to be with some difficulty that she controlled her voice to speak.

"It is very chivalrous and very noble of Sir Lionel to make the offer, but I agree with Mr. Hamilton," she said in a low voice; "it is a useless sacrifice to expose one so entirely inexperienced in hot climates and their diseases, and I am very sure Lord Marchmont would object strongly."

I was so foolishly elated that Miss Desloge should think me "noble" that it did not occur to me until a long time after to wonder that my father's title should come so glibly from her tongue. And if she had meant to dissuade me from my purpose she had gone the wrong way about it. If she thought it "chivalrous" in me to offer to help nurse the fever-stricken, then nothing anyone could say, not even herself, should persuade me differently.

Nor had I ever seen her so beautiful. On shipboard she had worn only such clothes as were suitable to a rough sea-voyage, and though they could not disguise her beauty, neither did they set it off as did the dainty frock of white India muslin, sprigged with rosebuds and decked with flowing lace and fluttering ribbons at neck and elbows. On shipboard her shoulders had always been decorously protected with a handkerchief and long sleeves covered her arms; now her gown was low enough to disclose shoulders and throat of drifted snow and the lace of her sleeves fell back from the elbow to bare an arm and tapering wrist more beautifully molded than any I had ever seen in marble.

I had small chance to talk to her but I could see that young Irving and Mr. La Force were vying with each other to win her notice, and that Mr. Burr cast many admiring glances her way, and did not disdain to try those arts of fascination with her that, I learned later, had been so successful with many of his country-women. I was seated by Miss Livingston and she proved herself so entertaining that I forgot for the time my indignation with her at her treatment of Miss Desloge. I could not but observe that she kept a constant surveillance of her "companion," yet it seemed, on the whole, a friendly one, though as she frequently directed my attention to her it became at times embarrassing to me.

"See," she said in a confidential half-tone to me, "the Vice-president himself is trying his arts. My protégé must be a charmer indeed if Mr. Burr considers her worthy of his steel."

"Is Mr. Burr so difficult to please?" I asked, not knowing what else to say.

"He would be difficult to please, indeed, I think, if Mademoiselle Desloge did not please him," she answered, "in wit and beauty; but our Vice-president looks for wealth and social position as well in his victims. You know his reputation, do you not? No woman can withstand his wiles if he chooses to exert them."

"But has he not a wife?"

"Oh, no, he is a widower, and a very gay one, though his devotion to his daughter is so great — they are such good comrades — that he has never married again."

And then abruptly:

"Do you know, I do not like that Mr. La Force! If he takes to making love to Mademoiselle I shall interfere. Oh la! I see I am to have my hands full with such a pretty companion. I ought to have secured an old and ugly one if I am to have any comfort. No doubt she will be stealing my own lovers presently, but when it comes to that, I 'll send Missie back to France posthaste."

I did not doubt she would be as good as her word, and seeing how every man that came near Mademoiselle Desloge fell a victim to her charms at once, I began to feel sorry for her.

"Who is this Mr. La Force that you do not like?" I asked to divert her from Miss Desloge as a topic of conversation.

"My Uncle Edward's confidential clerk. My uncle is mayor of the city, as you probably know, and also attorney of the State, and Mr. La Force serves him as clerk in both capacities, and Uncle Edward trusts him implicitly."

"Your uncle knows him to be worthy of trust, I suppose."

"Of course, but that does not prevent my disliking the way he uses his eyes, and his sleek French fashion of talking. He is one of Monsieur Genet's protégés, and since Monsieur Genet married a Clinton and the Clintons and Livingstons are all good Republicans, I ought to like him, I suppose, but I can't."

"Is Mr. Burr a Republican also, and Mr. Hamilton?" I asked, beginning to feel interested in American politics.

"Mr. Hamilton! He is a Federalist of the Federalists! I have heard Aunt Kitty Livingston say we were all good Federalists once, but the French Revolution and Mr. Jefferson split us into two parties, and every Livingston became a French partisan and an ardent Republican."

"And Mr. Burr?"

"La, how you put me through my catechism! Are you an English spy?"

"Not at all, but Mr. Burr interests me."

Miss Livingston hesitated.

"He 's a Republican, too, I suppose, but some people say he is a Burrite, pure and simple. I do not believe Governor Clinton or my uncles thoroughly trust him, although he is of their party. But there, Mrs. Hamilton is giving us the signal. Don't sit too long over your cups, please; I want to return your catechism — about England."

I was one of the two young men who sprang up to hold back the doors for the ladies. Mr. La Force was the other.

"Beware," Miss Livingston whispered laughingly, as she passed me. "I believe Mr. La Force has designs on you. I caught him looking at you."

I hardly heard her, for Miss Desloge was immediately behind her, and I was determined to make her look at me and give me a chance to thank her for her expressed opinion of me. But I did not succeed, for as she passed through the wide open doors, she half turned her back on me and with a sweeping curtsy and a ravishing smile thanked Mr. La Force for his service. As we walked back to the table, Mr. La Force said to me courteously:

"I heard your magnanimous offer, Sir Lionel, and it emboldens me to ask a favor from you in Mr. Livingston's behalf. Since his illness the offices are left entirely in my charge, and I am called away, unexpectedly, to be gone for two days. I must leave to-morrow night and cannot possibly get back before the second night following. If you are indeed intending to remain in this pest-ridden city, would it be asking too much of you to sit in Mr. Livingston's office from ten to three for those two days? It is as cool and comfortable a place as I think you can find in the city."

The proposition took my breath away. I would have declined it promptly on the spot, save that it was put as a favor to Mr. Livingston. As it was, I temporized.

"You honor me," I said with a laugh. "I came near going in for a First in mathematics at Oxford, but as for books and accounts, I fear I know nothing about them."

We had reached the table and Mr. Hamilton was sitting at the upper end with all his guests gathered about him, convenient to the bottles of fine old Madeira the negro butler was placing before him. Mr. Gouverneur Morris was at his right and Mr. Hamilton called to me to take the place between him and Mr. Irving.

"What is that I hear about accounts?" he asked rather sharply, and I caught a keen glance, swift as lightning, directed toward Mr. La Force as he spoke.

It flashed into my mind that if there should be anything not quite plain and above board in Mr. La Force's proposal, as Mr. Hamilton's suspicious glance would seem to indicate, or if he should have "designs" on me, as Miss Livingston had suggested, my best plan was to state his proposal openly before all these gentlemen, who knew the conditions so much better than I. So I answered:

"Mr. La Force asks me to take charge of Mr. Livingston's office for a couple of days while he is obliged to be absent."

I thought Mr. La Force looked a little disturbed and colored slightly, but he took up my explanation imperturbably as he seated himself further down the table.

"There would be no question of accounts. It would simply be sitting in a cool office from ten to three with such pleasant reading as I might be able to furnish, so that some trustworthy person might appear to be in charge, and the office properly guarded in Mayor Livingston's and my own, unavoidable absence. I should not have thought of proposing it to Sir Lionel but that he seemed anxious to do my employer a service by helping to nurse him, and I thought he might be doing him as great a service in this way and with much less peril to himself."

"Nonsense!" began Mr. Hamilton, but Mr. Burr interposed suavely,

"I'm not sure but Mr. La Force is right. If Sir Lionel insists on doing Mr. Livingston a service, a few days in a comfortable office might be a better preparation for the perils of nursing than plunging into it at once so soon after a long sea voyage."

My new-found friends discussed it pro and con, Mr. Irving siding warmly with Mr. Burr, and Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Morris demurring, without so much as consulting me. This seemed to strike Mr. Morris at last,

"After all, it's not our business, but Sir Lionel's, and the casting vote is his. How shall it be, Sir Lionel?"

I had been slowly coming to a decision.

"I will do as Mr. La Force asks, provided that, immediately on his return, Mr. Irving and Mr. Kemble will take me with them and initiate me into the mysteries of nursing."

"Well, Patroon?" interrogated Mr. Irving, addressing Mr. Kemble.

"I'm willing, Jonathan," returned Mr. Kemble, whereupon both gentlemen turned to me and gravely gave me their hands upon it.

"Patroon," said Mr. Irving, "the day that Sir Lionel is released from office will be one of our rest days. What say you to taking him out for that night and the next day to Cockloft Hall?"

"Well and good," agreed the "Patroon" gravely, "and I will see if we can get hold of Nuncle, Sinbad, Captain Great Heart, the Supercargo and Ooromdates. Doctor and Billy Taylor I know are out of town."

Here was a promise of good cheer, for I knew the titles, of course, were nicknames. I was sure this young fellow was no great "Patroon" and "Cockloft Hall" had the most enticing suggestion of sport. My spirits rose steadily, for if they were all as enchanting young fellows as the courtly "Patroon" and the gay "Jonathan" I foresaw the promise before me of much good fellowship to lighten my exile.

My affairs having been settled, the company fell naturally into two parts; Mr. Hamilton, Mr. Morris, Mr. Troup and Mr. Burr forming one, and we youngsters the other. There was not so much heavy drinking as I have sometimes seen at English dinner tables and there was more gay talk and laughter, more sparkling wit and polished repartee among the younger men than I had been accustomed to, and with which I sometimes found it difficult to hold my own. I attributed this brilliancy to the influence of the French, who, I knew, had swarmed in such numbers to America and had given a French tone to New York society, but it was Mr. Irving, and not the Frenchman, who was the leader in the gay encounter of wit, with the courtly Kemble as a close second. My friend Lloyd sat rather quiet, repressed, no doubt, by the thought of the sick father at home. I was constantly drawn into it, and, my spirits rising steadily with the feeling of emulation, I did my best for the honor of old Oxford. The stories I told were most of them on the Dean of Magdalen, a character in Oxford famous for twisting his tongue. They would have been stale enough at home but I hoped they were new here. I was in the act of recounting how, at the vesper service at Magdalen on Show Sunday, the Dean offered my aunt and a young lady visiting us (I did not mention Peggy's name) his seat in chapel, rising with a magnificent flourish and a stately—"Will you occupew my pie, ladies?" when, amid the roar of laughter with which they politely greeted my little tale, I caught a sentence uttered by Mr. Hamilton, his magnetic tones a little raised by the heat of argument. It attracted the attention of the others, also, and for the next ten minutes we young men were silent, listening, with respectful interest, to a debate between the "two most brilliant men in the country," Mr. Irving whispered in my ear.

"A Democracy is the most mischievous of all establishments," were Mr. Hamilton's words that had attracted my attention, "A Republic the most ideal."

"I do not altogether agree with you," objected Mr. Burr suavely. "A Democracy is a government of the people and for the people, a Republic is sometimes an aristocracy."

"Every cowherd hopes to be president in a Democracy," exclaimed Hamilton scornfully.

"Why not?" asked Burr coolly, "if the cowherd can accomplish it?"

"What is the meaning of civilization, pray?" Hamilton rejoined more courteously, evidently recalling himself to his obligation as host, "if the educated, enlightened, broad-minded, are not to rule?"

"I believe no 'cowherd' could attain to the presidency without becoming 'educated, enlightened and broad-minded' in the process."

"I differ with you, sir. If, after the cowherd had become all that, by some miracle of nature or grace, he should then be willing to devote his superiority of mind and character to the benefit of mankind by assuming the responsibilities of office, I would be the last to object. But he is not to embellish his understanding for the sake of his own aggrandizement. God knows no true man can be happy in power, but it is a sacrifice for the good of the mass that is sometimes demanded. He will be the sufferer, but mankind will be the happier."

"How about Bonaparte?"

"You know what I think of Bonaparte, sir," sternly. "But I do not believe him to be a greater autocrat than Jefferson, only our tyrant fools the world by wearing dirty old clothes and by being familiar with his inferiors."

Mr. Burr smiled.

"I 'm not sure I disagree with you entirely about Mr. Jefferson, though it may be treason in me to speak so of my chief."

"Your chief has a consummate knowledge of the limited understanding; he knows how to tickle it with a straw. I consider this Louisiana Purchase as nothing more nor less than a bait to the masses. Our country was large enough, God knows, if it is to be governed well and as a whole."

"Then you think Massachusetts is right to threaten to secede because of Louisiana?"

Mr. Burr spoke quickly, with a keenness of glance at Hamilton that betokened his interest in his reply.

"God forbid!" ejaculated Mr. Hamilton, his tone deepening and his eyes glowing with earnestness. "I pledged every faculty to the consummation of the Union — I will pledge my last vital spark to its maintenance."

"Oh, I hope it will never come to that," returned Mr. Burr lightly, "but sometimes I think that with this Louisiana Purchase consummated the country is big enough to hold two nations within its borders; and since the interests of the West are so diametrically opposed to those of the East it might not be a bad idea to set up a new Republic across the Mississippi."

"A new Republic or a new *Empire?*" interrogated Mr. Hamilton, again with that keenly suspicious glance at Mr. Burr. Could it be he suspected him of any designs in that direction?

"Oh, a new Republic, of course," replied Mr. Burr, with a slight flush, as if he understood and resented the glance. But here the conversation became general once more, and I turned to laugh at a witty jest of Mr. Irving's, but with a feeling that I had, in these few minutes, gained a glimpse into American politics, and more than a glimpse of the characters of the two leading personalities in those politics.

A few moments later Mr. Hamilton said, "Shall we join the ladies?" And with a kindly smile directed particularly to me, "I would like to show you my thirteen trees, Sir Lionel."

We found the ladies seated under thirteen beautiful black gum trees, set out, Mr. Hamilton said, to commemorate the thirteen original states. My eyes fell at once on Mademoiselle Desloge seated under one of them and holding in her arms a beautiful baby boy, not more than a year old, with a crop of golden curls tumbling all over his head and his father's wonderful dark eyes. I was quite determined that I should have a few words of conversation with her before I left and I started directly towards her, but Mr. Burr was ahead of me.

"What an adorable picture of a Madonna, Mademoiselle," I overheard him say in his softest tones.

It was exactly what I had been thinking, but nevertheless I regarded him as a detestable flatterer for voicing my thought, and I turned to Miss Livingston.

"This is the most beautiful spot I have ever seen, Miss Livingston. Tell me what I am looking at, please."

We were standing on a green pinnacle, the land falling away from us on all sides. Green archways at our right and our left and in front of us gave us three different landscapes, each more beautiful, if possible, than the other. To the left was a narrow river winding among wooded ravines, the Haarlem, Miss Livingston said, and still farther to the left and a little to the south, the wide East River. On the right lay the majestic Hudson, bearing a hundred white-sailed sloops on its broad bosom, with the green shores and bluffs of Jersey for a background. In front of us, ten miles away, we could catch silvery glimpses of the bay up which we had sailed that very morning — it seemed a week ago — and between, a rolling country of field and forest and winding roads, and blue smoke rising here and there from the chimneys of some comfortable farmhouse or gentleman's country mansion. All this Miss Livingston pointed out and not very far away the white-pillared porch of a house on the bluffs above the Haarlem, which she said belonged to Mr. Roger Morris, my quondam acquaintance, and still farther to the south and east, just where the Haarlem emptied into that other great river, as broad as the Hudson and like it dotted with white sails, the smoke from the chimneys of Morrisania, Mr. Gouverneur Morris' place. And farther still to the north a faint blue mist and a gleam of white that she said belonged to the Van Cortlandt Manor House, which I must certainly see, as it was one of the great show-places of Manhattan.

I was much interested in the wonderful view and her descriptions, but not so absorbed but that I overheard Mrs. Hamilton say:

"Angelica, show the young people Lovers' Lane. It will be very beautiful at this time of the evening."

There were exclamations of delighted approval from the young people and a stir as of arrangement for the walk. I saw Mr. Kemble coming toward us and I hurriedly excused myself to Miss Livingston and in a moment was at Miss Desloge's side. I was in time to hear Mr. Burr say, with his soft smile:

"I wonder if I might be considered one of the young people for a walk through Lovers' Lane?"

But before she had time to reply, I struck in boldly:

"Miss Desloge, may I claim you for this walk?"

Almost to my surprise she looked up and said "Yes," with that same twinkling glance, that once before had struck me as so familiar, and, with the Vice-president shaking his head reproachfully, and murmuring "Cruel," we followed Mrs. Alston and young Irving down a steep and winding path through a rocky dell where the trees met over our heads, allowing only occasional shafts of the western sun to pierce the green canopy above and gild the mossy rocks below, and with a sparkling little stream dancing over its rocky bed beside us, and cool, damp odors of cedar and mint filling the evening air, until we came out on a green terrace just above the river, where we sat down in a little pavilion on the bank to watch the sunset, a flaming canopy of crimson and gold above the dark wooded shores of Jersey. We watched it until the glory faded, leaving only soft gleams on the shining face of the river, while the purple twilight settled slowly down about us, and brilliant fireflies, such as I had never seen before, fell in showers of light over the wooded bluffs behind us like Guy Fawkes' fireworks, and I felt that I would be quite willing to spend the two years of my exile in that enchanted spot with Miss Desloge beside me, her rich contralto tones mingling with the laughter and the songs of the others as a 'cello mingles with tinkling guitars and mandolins.

A wide band of clear yellow still lingered over the black heights of Jersey. Into this daffodil sky there sailed the slender crescent of the new moon. "A silver shallop on a golden sea," Mademoiselle Desloge said, and we turned to climb, rather silently, the rocky, winding path to the house above.

And I, for one, was glad it was steep, since she could not well refuse a helping hand, even if she would.

IX

AN AMAZING MEETING

NEITHER Mr. Burr nor Mr. La Force had been of our party in Lovers' Lane. Mr. Burr had made his adieus to Mrs. Hamilton — I imagined rather to the relief of that little lady — before we started, and carried off Mr. La Force with him to spend the night at Richmond Hill. He had left Mrs. Alston to the care of Mr. Irving — who, Miss Livingston whispered to me, had been an unsuccessful lover when she was Theodosia Burr — but cautioned them against being out too late, since the mists rising at night from river and swamp, more particularly from the Lispenard Meadows, were regarded as peculiarly miasmatic in fever times.

I could not but admire the elegance and ease with which Mr. Burr made his adieus, where, even to a stranger like myself, it was evident he was not an entirely welcome guest. Indeed, there was something about the man that fascinated me in spite of my feeling that he was not wholly trustworthy. I had not liked his attentions to Miss Desloge — young enough to be his daughter — and therefore I was not sorry to see him go, but neither was I sorry to have him say as he said good-by, "We shall hope to see you at Richmond Hill, Sir Lionel, and very soon." I hoped he would follow up the invitation with one more definite, for I was beginning to feel a keen curiosity about this slender, boyish Vice-president with his smiling eyes and his silver tongue.

Mr. La Force, also, said a parting word to me.

"Sir Lionel, could you be at Mayor Livingston's office at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon? I leave the city at five and I should like to put you in possession before I go."

I agreed to be there at three, though with some hesitation, for it curtailed a little the ride I had intended to make with my friend Lloyd. We had arranged that I should ride with him as far as I could and get back for the five o'clock ferry from Paulus Hook. I would have to catch the twelve o'clock ferry, if I was to be at Mr. Livingston's office by three, and lose five hours of my farewell visit with him. Yet I could easily see that it was quite necessary that Mr. La Force should introduce me to my duties and I had to remind myself vigorously that it was a service I was rendering my patron and friend, ill through his own noble devotion, and not a service to Mr. La Force, whom, for some reason, I could not bring myself to like.

Mr. La Force was no doubt regarded as a handsome man. His dark curling hair was worn à la Bonaparte, neither powdered nor tied but cut short in the neck with one curly lock falling over the forehead. It was the newest fashion and I had already noticed a number of the New York men following it. Because it was French and introduced by Bonaparte, no self-respecting Briton would have adopted it, and I was glad to see that Hamilton and Morris and Irving and my friend Lloyd still wore their hair long enough to be neatly tied with a ribbon. I had to confess, however, that the style became Mr. La Force extremely, and set off well a shapely head, and since it was new and different and French, no doubt made him all the more attractive to the ladies. His mouth was small and his lips a brilliant red, and when he smiled he flashed two rows of very white teeth in what I regarded as a most offensive manner. I have never admired a small mouth in a man, and yet Mr. Washington Irving's mouth was small also, and I had not found it offensive, for his lips were of nature's pink, not art's scarlet, and when he smiled, though his teeth were white, there was no effect of flashing them at one and his lips took on such genial curves and the eyes above them were so full of frank good humor that one must needs smile with him.

Not so Mr. La Force's eyes. I met him many times after that first day (though it was never possible that I could be on intimate terms with him) yet I never discovered anything approaching a smile in his eyes, and they had a peculiarity which up to that time I had never seen: the color light blue, with very black lashes, full and short, on the lower lid, giving them a most sinister effect; especially as a line of white usually showed below the iris and just above that pronounced black line of the lower lid. Poets and artists to the contrary, I have never found a thickly-lashed lower lid beautiful, unless, like Mademoiselle Deslogé's, the lashes were curling and golden brown in color.

Yet I do not know why I should dwell so long on Mr. La Force's eyes unless it is to explain my instinctive distrust of the man. No one else, that I could see, had any such feeling toward him, unless Mr. Hamilton's suspicious glances when he first heard Mr. La Force's proposal to me indicated distrust.

Bourbon Prince had recovered from his voyage sufficiently to allow of Lloyd's riding him and a wagon had been engaged to meet us at Paulus Hook to convey Cæsar, Chloe and the luggage as far as Trenton, since, on account of the fever in New York, the Philadelphia stages ran only so far. The City Tavern livery furnished me a very good horse, and because Lloyd wanted to spare Bourbon Prince the heat of the day, and because he was eager, also, to press on as far as possible toward home, the early dawn saw our little cavalcade boarding the ferry boat, a huge flat barge with a platform at one end for the horses, and manned by three stalwart negroes with long sweep oars.

The air was fresh and cool and drenched with dew, with much more of the feeling of an English summer morning than yesterday's had been, and as our little party was safely stowed away on the boat, and the long oars began to sweep the water, and we slowly glided from the shore, I had leisure to enjoy the wonderful beauty of the scene. We were crossing the river just above the point where it broadens into the beautiful, island-dotted bay, landlocked, apparently, by the smiling green shores of Jersey, Staten Island and Long Island. The white walls and dark roofs of Richmond Hill House on the bluffs above the river were clearly outlined against the rapidly

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brightening dawn as our boat drew out into the river, and just above it the morning star swam golden in a violet sky. The lawns and shrubberies sloped down to the water's edge and it looked very lovely in the early morning light. Just as it looked then I was to see it again on another summer morning, looking like the peaceful abode of all that was good but seeming to me like the dreadful haunt of all that was evil; and it is an indelible picture in my memory.

When Chloe and Cæsar and the boxes were stowed away in the wagon waiting for us, Lloyd bade the driver make as good time as he could for Trenton, where he would meet them at the old King George Tavern. Our horses feeling fresh, we set off at a gallop for the village of Newark, through which we thundered at such a pace that foot passengers stopped to stare at us and heads were thrust from shop doors and house windows to see what was happening in the quiet streets. We had been delayed in getting Chloe and Cæsar started and by the time we reached the village of Elizabeth, a few miles farther on, the sun was well up and no less hot than it had been the day before, and I, for one, was quite ready for a second breakfast and quite sure our horses would do all the better for a few oats, a pail of water and a little rest. But Lloyd said nothing about stopping until we had left behind us the village street, with its overhanging elms and its white houses comfortably set on cool shady lawns, and I wondered why. If he did not suggest breakfast soon I should, for I was not made of such stern stuff as needed no refreshment for the inner man, and the lagging step of my horse assured me that neither was he.

But Lloyd knew what he was about. On the outskirts of this pretty little village of Elizabeth he drew rein under a wide elm that sentineled the entrance to a small park with some magnificent trees scattered over a smooth shaven lawn, and a short avenue densely shaded by drooping hemlocks and chestnuts leading up to a house of noble proportions.

"Sir Lionel," he said, as, with the deliberation that characterized all his movements, he drew from his pocket a little note, "Mr. Hamilton handed me yesterday an invitation from the Countess Niemcéwiscz to stop, on our way home, at Liberty Hall for rest and breakfast, or dinner, as the case might be. This is Liberty Hall and here is our breakfast awaiting us, I have no doubt."

"Did the invitation include me?" I asked with sharp suspicion.

"No, unfortunately, for it was written and sent to Mr. Hamilton a week ago, to be delivered to me whenever I might happen to arrive, and none of my friends, then, so much as knew of your existence; but there will be no question of the welcome awaiting you."

"It seems to be the custom of the country," I said, trying to speak coolly, but feeling a wave of anger surge within me at the thought that my friend had tried to entrap me into this breakfast party, since he had not, all this time, so much as mentioned Liberty Hall, to say nothing of the invitation. "It seems to be a custom of the country to go as uninvited guest wherever a friend may happen to take you; but I am not yet sufficiently Americanized. I thank you for your share in the invitation. You will breakfast with your friends, of course, and I and my nag will go back to Elizabeth and find an inn that will give us a morsel to eat."

I probably was not successful in entirely disguising my irritation, for he seemed much troubled at my proposal to return to Elizabeth and proceeded to argue the matter at length with me. I was not to be moved from my decision and we might have still been standing in the cool green shadow of that great elm, discussing the pros and cons, had not a most amazing thing happened.

The entrance to the park was closed by great iron gates heavily spiked on top, and but a few feet beyond the gates the short avenue of trees leading up to the house curved in such a manner as to conceal the driveway. At this moment our heated discussion was arrested by the sound of thundering hoofs, and around the curve flashed a horse and rider, the horse a superb creature, but too evidently running away, and the rider apparently a young girl. A moment more and horse and rider would be hurled against those great iron gates and both, probably, to their death.

I had often bemoaned my slight and boyish figure, but my muscles were of steel and perhaps it was due to my size that I was off my horse and at the gates and with a tremendous tug had thrown them wide before my companion was well dismounted. From the great size of the horse I thought he must own Norman blood, but from his flaming eyes, and quivering nostrils and flashing hoofs I was sure there was a goodly strain of Arabian with the Norman. As he thundered down upon me, I sprang to one side and, as he flashed by me, caught his bridle at the throat. The brute threw up his head and snorted aloud with rage, flinging me from side to side much as he might have flung a dangling terrier, and hardly checking his onward rush for my swaying weight. But I held on, hoping to tire him, or hoping that Lloyd would come to my help, or hoping that he would heed his mistress' voice speaking soothing words in tones that tingled to my finger tips and strengthened my clutch on the bridle till I believe only death itself could have loosened it.

It seemed to me a long time that I was swaying from side to side with my agonized clutch on the great brute's bridle, his hot breath scorching my face, fearing that after all I might not be able to save its rider from death, but no doubt it was less than a minute until Bourbon Prince thundered ahead of us and Lloyd sprang off and threw his great weight on the horse's neck, and together, but not, I believe, without the help of those firm and commanding tones that thrilled me, we brought the brute to a standstill, dripping from every pore, every muscle quivering, every limb trembling, his eye still rolling wildly but recognizing, as a beast always does, that he is conquered and must submit.

Not until the brute was thoroughly subdued did I lift my eyes, knowing well what they would meet but hardly daring to believe it; for had I not left the owner of that voice at Mr. Hamilton's place far up in the northern end of Manhattan

Island only late the night before? Combs and pins had flown to the wind in that breathless ride and around her shoulders fell a tawny mane of tangled curls that shone like burnished copper. It was a sight to dazzle any man's eyes and it must have dazzled mine for, as I looked up into hers, their brown depths seemed to me for a moment to glow with a stronger feeling than gratitude as they looked down into mine.

X

I MAKE A FAITHFUL FRIEND

IT was only for a moment that I met that glowing glance. The next she turned to Lloyd and, with a hand outstretched to both, she said lightly with no trace of the emotion in her voice that I had seen in her eyes, "I thank you, gentlemen. You have probably saved a life, which is always a good thing to do, no matter of how little worth the saving of it may seem."

She gave us no chance to protest her speech, but, putting a hand on Lloyd's shoulder, with a bright blush for her boldness in so doing, sprang lightly to the ground.

Then she said, "I have won my wager, but I hope no one will be so reckless as to ride the beast home again. I am convinced he is dangerous."

"What was the wager, Mademoiselle?" I asked, but before she could reply two men and a boy came running down the driveway and behind them three women, uttering loud cries as they ran. The one in the lead was Miss Livingston, who, seeing Mademoiselle Desloge alive and well, threw herself into her arms and burst into tears with what seemed to me an unusual show of devotion toward a hired companion who was almost a stranger. I was sure her emotion bespoke a good heart in Miss Livingston.

"I hope Aunt Kitty will send the beast straight back to Monticello," she ejaculated, as soon as she could control her speech. "What is Mr. Jefferson thinking of to send William such a vicious brute!"

But a young lad not yet out of his teens spoke up with spirit:

"The horse is mine, Cousin Jane, and I will not have him sent back. I am very sure he is not vicious, he only needs a man to ride him."

At that the two older men laughed, and one of them said with an air of gallantry, although I am sure he only spoke the plain truth —

"No man could have ridden him better than Miss Desloge. I am not sure that any one of us would have come off half so well. That was a nasty wager you made, William, and you owe Miss Desloge an apology."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Desloge; I did not believe you would take me up or I would never have made it. No woman, no matter how accomplished she is, ought to ride such a powerful beast, and, as Mr. Jefferson says, only half broken."

He had a manly air in making his apology that quite won my liking and I have no doubt won Miss Desloge's. She smiled on him adorably.

"You are quite right, Mr. Jay" (the boy blushed crimson; I am sure he had never been called anything but Master William before). "No woman of sense would do such a dare-devil thing, I am afraid I was vain of my horsemanship, and it serves me right to be mortified before you all."

Then everyone exclaimed at once that her horsemanship was wonderful and that she had no reason for mortification.

"I 'm sure you ought to be both proud and grateful," said Miss Livingston. "I never saw anything half so magnificent as you were flying down the avenue on that great beast's back. And to think that you are still alive!"

All this time Lloyd had been standing with his arm over the horse's neck and I still clutching the bridle. Miss Livingston's first agitation subsiding, she had time to think of us and presented us to the company with many eulogiums for what she was pleased to call our "bravery," which she took for granted, since she had not been a witness of it. The boy proved to be a son of Mr. John Jay, the great judge and diplomat, and grandson of the Mr. Livingston of Liberty Hall who had been the "war governor" of Jersey. The ladies were, one of them, that "Aunt Kitty," of whom I had heard Miss

Livingston speak, a daughter of Governor Livingston and married to her cousin, a Livingston of Livingston Manor; the other was our hostess, the charming Countess Niemcéwiscz, a Livingston also, but of another branch of the family, who had bought Liberty Hall after the death of her uncle, the Governor. The two gentlemen were the husbands of the two ladies, both of them men of elegance and fashion, as could be seen at a glance, but the young Polish count, friend of Kosciusko, one of the most delightful men I have ever met.

There was no escaping the friendly importunities of the ladies, when they found that I was Lloyd's friend and the "savior of Miss Desloge," as they put it grandiloquently. When the party started for the house, two men, one on each side, leading the big horse Saladin, as they called him, and Lloyd leading Bourbon Prince, I turned to look for my nag. The rascal had taken to his heels and a whole troop of blacks, big and little, having flocked down the avenue at the sound of the commotion, the countess sent two of them in search of the recreant. She called me to her and kept me by her side most of the way up to the house, asking me of home and family in such a charming and friendly fashion that it could not but dissipate some of the regret I felt at not being one of the little group behind me; of which I could easily tell Miss Desloge was the center of interest, since I could hear her voice and laugh in merry response to every speech uttered by the others.

If I were to be deprived of Miss Desloge's society on this walk I would take some slight recompense by discovering how she and Miss Livingston had made their miraculous appearance at Liberty Hall ahead of us.

"Oh, they came down in the Clermont sloop early this morning," said the countess in response to what I considered my skillfully directed inquiries. "They took the cool of the day and were here by a little after seven. It's much shorter by sloop than by horse. You had to ride all round the Newark Bay and marshes; they came straight down the river and down the bay and through the Kill von Kull. They surprised us almost before we were up. They were hungry as bears, they said, but they announced that you were on the way and would surely be here by nine, and they refused to sit down to breakfast until you should arrive. They timed you to a nicety. It is only a few minutes past nine and breakfast is ready and waiting."

"Did they come by — by invitation?" I asked awkwardly, knowing I had no right to put a question like that to a perfect stranger.

"Oh, no, we do not wait for invitations among friends," she answered. "I should not at all wonder if they had come entirely for the sake of giving you a surprise, since they knew you would stop here, and Jane dearly loves a jest."

"Then Mademoiselle had wanted to see us again," I thought, though I knew I had no right to flatter myself, since of course she was at the mercy of her mistress' whims.

"In that case I do not feel so unhappy at being an uninvited guest, myself, since it is the custom and since I am not the only one," I uttered aloud.

"Oh, surely not," said the countess quickly. "You know that your friend is more than welcome anywhere, as the son of his father, and your friend's friend is welcome for his sake, even if we were not immensely fond of our English kin and sometime foemen, for their own sake. Then you must know, Sir Lionel, what they say of us here in America, that a title goes a long way with us."

Now I did not like that last speech of hers at all and I began to stiffen inwardly in a way we Englishmen are accused of doing at the least provocation, when I happened to glance up into her eyes. She was smiling a little and her eyes were twinkling roguishly and altogether she had such a charming air of gentle audacity that perforce I found myself smiling back and saying:

"Oh, yes, no doubt, if it were an earl or a marquis or a duke, but — only a baronet?"

"A baronet with the blood of the old Thanes in his veins is worth more than a duke in the estimation of some people.

And the owner of one of the great show-places in England has distinction enough even if he were only a country squire."

I was embarrassed for a reply but there did not seem to be need of any. As she finished speaking she turned to Miss Desloge, who was now only a few feet behind us.

"Miss Desloge, you have been in England. Have you ever seen Clover Combe Court?"

Naturally I turned toward her to hear her answer and caught a startled glance that looked almost like fright. But she recovered instantly, and without any apparent hesitation, she answered:

"I believe I have seen it — once."

"Don't you think it the most beautiful place in all England?"

"It was so long ago I can hardly remember," she answered carelessly. "I believe it has that reputation."

Now I had not much liked the countess' speech about it being one of the great show-places of England. I had sometimes regretted that it was a show-place at all; nevertheless, I was proud of it, I suppose, and Miss Desloge's indifference nettled me.

"I have no doubt that the great show-places of France are much finer than anything we have in England," I said quickly.

"I don't know England very well; I have not been there since I was a child," she answered quietly, "but certainly we have some very beautiful places in France."

I thought I saw a chance to drop back by Miss Desloge, for I had heard the countess speaking to Lloyd and saw him leading Bourbon Prince nearer her.

"You never told me you had been in England, Miss Desloge," I said reproachfully. "You must have been there a long time to learn to speak English so perfectly as you do."

"Oh, I had an English governess when I was a child," she answered with a slight blush.

If Mademoiselle had an English governess, I argued mentally, that in itself bespeaks the social station I was sure she was born to. Somehow my spirits brightened at the thought and we fell into an easy strain of banter, such as I might have indulged in with Miss Livingston, and that was very different from the interchange of a few set phrases that, since our arrival in America, had been the extent of our communications.

Now I knew very well why my spirits had lightened. After our return from the Grange the night before, I had sat up late writing a letter to my father to be sent back by Captain Skinner on his return voyage. In it I had mentioned that Mr. Livingston was ill with a fever prevalent in the city, of which I made light, but I had said nothing of my intention to devote myself to the nursing of the fever patients, and I had said nothing of my acquaintance with Miss Desloge. There is no use in worrying my father at this distance, I said to myself, and I knew well he would worry greatly if he thought me exposed to the fever, and perhaps even more if he thought me exposed once more to the danger of falling in love with a beautiful young woman beneath me in station. Moreover, I was fully determined, for my father's sake, that I would not fall in love with her. I remembered well what he had said — "Your ancestors have always married women of equal or nobler birth, and women of every grace of character and of all the virtues."

I had said to him only one word of Peggy in my letter, but in saying it I had bound myself by a promise that I knew I must always hold sacred. "The captain delivered to me the two letters entrusted to him by you," I wrote. "It was a bitter draught but it did its work. It cleansed me of my folly, and now I never want to hear her name again; and I promise you the next time I fall in love it shall be with some one you can approve, and I will make no proposals of marriage to anyone until you shall give me leave."

Now I had not the slightest intention of falling in love with Miss Desloge, but nevertheless the fact that I thought I had discovered that she was of gentle blood, as good as my own, perhaps, gave me a sensible lightening of the heart, and a freedom in my speech that I had not felt before.

"Will you tell me, Miss Desloge," I asked her, when I had contrived to fall a little back of the others and so have her to myself, "how you and Miss Livingston happened to come to Liberty Hall this morning?"

"I don't know why you should ask or I should answer a question of that kind, Sir Lionel," she replied severely. "Miss Livingston doubtless feels at liberty to visit her friends and kinsmen whenever the inclination takes her."

"I stand rebuked and I beg your pardon. I see that you esteem me a meddlesome Paul Pry."

Then she relented.

"Oh," with a twinkling smile, "not quite that, and I do not mind telling you, nor do I believe Miss Livingston would mind, that last night, after you had left the Grange, she proposed that we take an early ride on her sloop and surprise you at Liberty Hall, where she knew you were to stop for breakfast. I think she thought it would be a good jest and she counted on enjoying your startled looks when you should first meet us, and then, I spoiled it all by my foolhardy venture on Saladin. I am afraid she was greatly disappointed, for I think Miss Livingston planned it for the sole purpose of enjoying the surprise of the young gentleman from England and the pleasure of meeting him once more."

"And Miss Desloge?" I asked, caring little for Miss Livingston's motives in the matter, but much for hers. "Was it the young gentleman from England or from America for whom she braved such an early morning ride?"

"Neither, my Lord Duke," she replied with a mocking half curtsy. I was startled for the moment. How could she know that I was my uncle's heir?

She laughed.

"Forgive me, Sir Lionel, if I was impertinent, but you said that with such a grand air, it was worthy of a duke, at least." Then she added soberly: "But you must know it is not for me to plan or to express pleasure at or disapprobation of Miss Livingston's whims. I am simply here to follow her lead, and if she does not lead me into either danger or folly I ought to be grateful."

Her tone stirred me to the quick. I could see that she was not used to service and that the yoke galled her. I felt myself moved by a dull anger. Miss Livingston was all very well, but who was she to have at the mercy of her caprices such a magnificent creature as Miss Desloge! "Worthy to grace a ducal coronet," I said to myself, and blushed at the thought.

As if Miss Livingston had penetrated my feeling and wished to irritate me still more, at this moment she called imperiously:

"Come hither, Mademoiselle Desloge!"

And when Mademoiselle obeyed her summons meekly, she whispered in her ear and sent her off to the house on some trivial errand as she would have sent any menial.

It was no longer a dull anger that stirred me. My blood boiled. And it appeased me not at all that Miss Livingston summoned me to her side and used all her arts in trying to soothe and amuse me. Perhaps if I had not been so angry I might have been flattered, for it certainly looked as if Miss Livingston had sent Miss Desloge to the house to secure me for herself. I have no doubt my brow was "a black thundercloud" and my eyes "smoldering flame," for that is how the American has described me to myself when I am angry and trying to repress the ebullition of my anger.

Fortunately for my reputation, perhaps, we had now reached the house, a noble mansion as houses go in America, with a broad shady porch over the entrance. Our hostess sent Lloyd and me up-stairs to our rooms in charge of a black body-servant.

"I give you ten minutes, sirs, to make a breakfast toilet, and not one minute longer," she said with pretty imperiousness. "If you are not down by that time we shall begin without you, for breakfast has been waiting so long I am sure it is utterly spoiled and our two young ladies are famishing."

I noticed then, and I have often noticed since in America, that the ladies have a little air in talking to men not quite like ours at home. It is as if they were queens giving orders to their vassals, but they do it so prettily and so sweetly that the men rush to obey them, and I believe I rather liked it.

At any rate I liked it in the countess and I hastened to obey her with a cleared brow. Whether by accident or intention I found myself seated by Mademoiselle Desloge at breakfast and opposite me was the young owner of Saladin. The massive round table would have seated a dozen as easily as it seated the nine who sat around it. All the windows were open to catch every breath of the light summer breeze stirring the branches of the lindens and maples that shaded them. The table was loaded with delicacies, many of them of a nature I had never seen before, and, to a man who had been as ravenously hungry as I had thought myself so short a while before, it ought to have been a pleasant hour indeed that we lingered around that generous board, bright with snowy damask and shining silver and a great bowl of garden flowers making a spot of glowing color in the center of the table. Perhaps it was, and yet something had gone to my head in such fashion that it was all an indistinct blur of foolish words and light laughter; of women looking cool and dainty in pretty muslin frocks; of big handsome men, beside whom I felt sure I looked small and dark and insignificant; of deft service by black boys, wearing white liveries and white muslin turbans, and bearing relays of smoking viands from a distant kitchen; of the fragrance in my nostrils and the flavor on my palate of such coffee as I had never tasted in old England; of scarcely knowing what I ate or drank at all, or what I said, or how I said it, until I was suddenly brought to a consciousness of time and place by a queer look on the face of young Master Jay sitting opposite me. He was white with anger, or some other emotion, and as I looked up and caught his eye, he bent forward and said in a low tone of restrained fury:

"A word with you after breakfast, if you please, Sir Lionel."

I stared at him a moment before I comprehended his meaning and then I bowed and turned again to Mademoiselle. I think she had heard the words, but did not understand them, and no one else seemed to hear. Was the boy mad? I wondered. A lad hardly half way through his teens and *jealous* — for that is what it looked like — and of a young woman he had never laid eyes on scarce two hours before? Had my eyes and voice betrayed me in talking to Mademoiselle? Then I must be more circumspect, for what the lad had noticed and resented, others might observe also.

One of the white-turbaned boys brought in a message to the countess at this moment, which he whispered in her ear.

"How provoking!" she exclaimed. "Tell Julius Cæsar and George Washington to saddle a couple of fast horses immediately and scour the country in every direction."

She turned to me and explained that the two negroes had been able to find no trace of my lost horse but she had sent them off again better equipped to overtake and capture the runaway. In the meantime I would be forced to a longer stay than I had at first intended, which she courteously hoped would give me as much pleasure as it gave her.

It did give me much pleasure for a moment — the thought that I might linger at Mademoiselle's side — but only for a moment. The remembrance of my engagement with Mr. La Force returned and I knew that I must rather cut my stay short than prolong it, since I must foot it in to the little village of Elizabeth and there hunt up a horse to carry me back to the city — all of which would cause delay and endanger my losing the twelve o'clock ferry.

When I explained this to the countess she would not listen to my hunting up a horse at Elizabeth. I should have one from her own stables, of course, to be sent back by the messenger who should bring my truant nag to the City Tavern. She was so insistent in her hospitable offer that there was nothing to do but yield with a good grace; and there flashed into my mind a method by which I might render a service in accepting her courtesy.

I had entirely forgotten, for the moment, Master William's black looks or I would not have blurted out my proposal so bluntly.

"Countess," I said, "at home it has been my pastime to tame and train unruly colts. Will you lend me Saladin? I believe I could send him back to you in a few days with his fine spirit unbroken, but ready to submit to the control of the gentlest hand."

"Oh, would you dare? William's Aunt Kitty and I would be so glad!" she began. "We are not willing that he should ride Saladin, neither do we like—"

"Aunt Marian!" Master William interrupted, in a white heat, in which courtesy to his aunts and to a stranger were alike forgotten, "Saladin is mine, if you please, Madam, and Sir Lionel and I will discuss the matter of my lending him after breakfast."

"With pleasure, Mr. Jay," I said somewhat sternly, for the boy's tantrums were growing unbearable, "and perhaps, Countess, you and Mrs. Livingston will permit us to retire and discuss it now, since I find I must be thinking of my return journey."

"Very well," she answered, glancing curiously at William, and no doubt wondering at his excitement, "but please go out to the stable first and take another look at Saladin. I do not want you to ride him unless you are certain he is safe. I should not like to be responsible to your father for a broken head or even a broken limb, Sir Lionel."

And thus it was that I came into possession, for the length of my stay in America, of the most perfect horse I have ever had the good fortune to bestride. When I looked at him again and noted his fine eye, his small, pointed ears, his breadth of girth and delicately-tapering limbs, and the fine tracery of veins showing through his burnished coat, my soul coveted him and I determined upon the spot that I would speak Master William fair as long as he would let me, remembering always that he was but a boy and must be treated with the courtesy due a boy from an older man. And that if I could bring any arts to bear to induce the boy to lend me his horse, I should not hesitate to use them, since it would be only for a few days and I would be rendering him a real service in taming the brute, for in his present condition he was in no wise safe for any but the most skillful rider.

So seeing that the boy, now that we were alone together, was red and confused, hardly knowing how to begin what he was yet determined to say, I spoke to him with great apparent respect and deference.

"Mr. Jay," I said, "you had something you wished to say to me and it would seem from your manner that I have offended you. I pray you to believe that no offense has been intended. Nothing could have been further from my thought and desire than to give offense to a young gentleman of Liberty Hall, where I have been most courteously treated."

I could see him flush with pleasure at my deferential address, but he did not think it quite dignified, I suppose, to be too easily mollified.

"Sir," he said, "it seems to me you have treated with undue lightness a young lady who is under the protection of my aunt's roof and therefore under my protection. Your manner shows entirely too great a degree of familiarity to be used toward a strange young lady."

"Do you mean Mademoiselle Desloge?" I asked, secretly amused at the grandiloquence of the boy, but also rather pleased with his gallant protection of demoiselles. "I greatly deprecate anything which may have seemed like undue familiarity in my manner toward Miss Desloge. I feel for her only respectful admiration and reverence. I think, sir, it must be that in an acquaintance of five weeks on shipboard one grows to have the feeling of long friendship, and perhaps that is the excuse for an appearance of familiarity that is not intentional."

"An acquaintance of five weeks!" exclaimed the boy, greatly astonished. "I thought, sir, you had met her this morning for the first time. I beg your pardon, Sir Lionel, if I have seemed unduly captious."

"You do not need to beg my pardon, Mr. Jay," I answered gravely. "I respect the impulse that prompted your resentment toward me. It must ever be with us men *noblesse oblige,* sir, where the ladies are concerned."

If I was partly in jest in the gravity of my utterance, I was also partly in earnest, for I liked the spirit of the lad, and when I felt his hand in mine I gave it as hearty a grasp as if it were the hand of an old friend of mine own age. The lad was won.

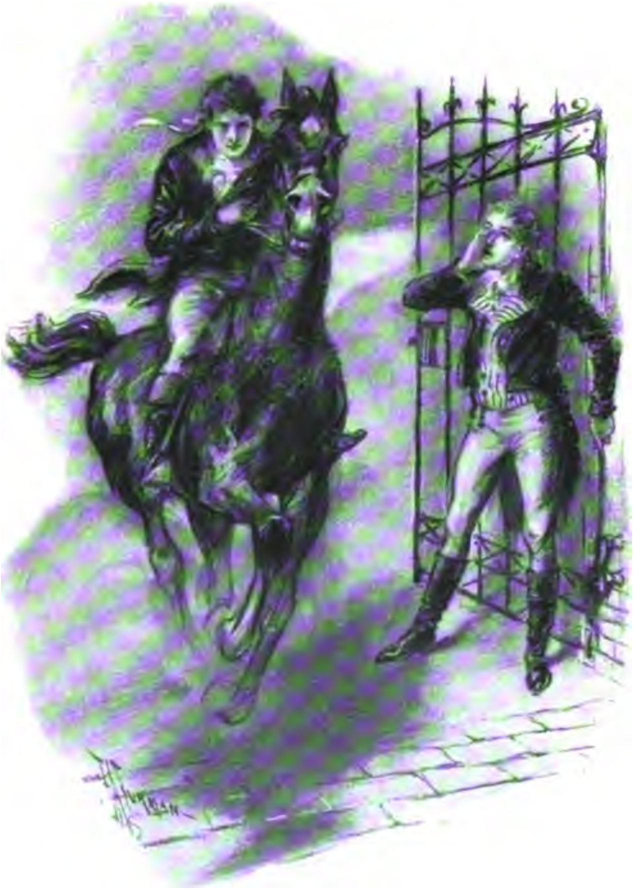
"Take Saladin, Sir Lionel," he exclaimed grandly. "Do with him what you please and keep him as long as you like. He is yours till you care to return him."

I had no idea of taking the generous youth at his word, but circumstances developed later that made Saladin virtually mine, as I said before, for my stay in America.

Now, when two sturdy negro grooms, trembling, I believe, in every limb, brought out the magnificent creature whose eye still glowed with lambent flame, I spent a good ten minutes of the few I had to spare in caressing the beautiful beast, stroking his white nose, and making him look me squarely in the eye, patting his quivering flank, and above all, getting him used to the sound of my voice, every tone of which I made evident to his wise ears was thoroughly friendly.

When at last I thought he was somewhat used to me I vaulted into the saddle, but at that the beast lost his head again, snorting with terror, pitching, rearing, plunging, flinging the two men, who clung desperately to his bit, from side to side with the tossing of his powerful head and neck. I could see the eyes of the black men rolling with terror, and William, forgetting for the moment his dignity, implored me to get off before I should be killed.

But the beast was not vicious, only beside himself with terror, and as soon as I felt that my seat was assured, I called to the grooms to let him go. Like an arrow shot from the bow he sprang through the stable doors, tore down the road to the house, swept like the wind around it to the front, where the whole party came running out on to the porch, silent, lest any word add to the beast's terror; then straight off like a great swift-winged bird down the driveway, toward that iron-spiked gate at the entrance. I had my hands full and my mind also, in my vain efforts to control the beast, but I yet had time to



"Fine!" he shouted as we swept by him

note Mademoiselle Desloge, wide-eyed, pale as any wraith, and the big American, eyes glowing, eager, alert. I was not sure whether those great gates were open; I had stupidly forgotten to see that they were before getting on Saladin's back, but I had hardly had time to regret my stupidity when I caught sight of a road curving to the left, and straining every nerve and muscle, by pressure of knee and bridle and wrist, I swerved him into the left-hand course. Then I gave him free rein again and we plunged madly on, only, now that I saw that he could by mighty stress be guided, I no longer felt any fear of the result and began to enjoy the wild ride.

To my dismay the road continued to curve to the left and in a few moments I was once more flashing by the house and the excited group on the porch, which had changed a little — the American was no longer there and young Jay had just come running up from the stables and joined them. Once more Saladin dashed down the avenue toward the gates. Should I turn him again to the left? It was too spectacular; it was absurd! Was I to make an endless round, down the avenue, up the curving road, past the house and down again, till Saladin was tired out and I had become a laughing stock to my friends? Rather run the risk of being able to stop him should the gates be shut. I let him go, down the avenue, and at that moment the gates came in sight. They were wide open and beside them stood the big American.

"Fine!" he shouted as we swept by him. "You'll have him, in about fifteen minutes!"

For ten minutes, straight away I let him have his head, and the wind was no swifter or freer than Saladin in his flight. It was a joy to be flying through the air on the back of such a magnificent creature. All the winds of Arabia were in his ringing hoofs, all the strength and endurance of Normandy in his powerful muscles, stretching rhythmically beneath me.

At the end of ten minutes I began to bear gently on his bridle and speak to him friendly words of soothing, and at the end of five minutes more I found I could turn him with ease into a cross road which I believed must lead back toward the house, and sure enough, by a little longer detour, it brought us once more to the open gates.

We were still skimming through the air like a bird on the wing, but Saladin was moving quietly and I felt sure I could stop him at a word. Once more we flashed up to the door, and at the sound of ringing hoofs out they all rushed again, with young William and Lloyd in the lead, and Mademoiselle lingering in the rear. At my check on his bridle and at my word Saladin stopped still, as I had believed he would, and I sprang from the saddle and stood at his head lest he be frightened at the clamor of excited voices welcoming me back to safety.

Oh, he was a beauty to look upon! Flecked with foam, eyes still flashing fire, muscles quivering, and yet standing as steadfast as any soldier at his post. Lloyd came down and threw his arm over the splendid creature's neck, and for one moment I felt a spasm of jealousy that Mademoiselle should see what a splendid picture they made, horse and man both so magnificent, like some grand St. George and his charger.

But then Mademoiselle herself came down from the high stoop and stood beside me and stroked Saladin's pretty white nose with her little hand and called him "Good fellow, fine fellow!" until he began to understand it, and to like her soft touch and soft voice and rub his nose gently against her arm, and then I knew my beauty was tamed.

They were all loud in their praises of my horsemanship, and Master William was loudest of all. "Wonderful!" they called it, and many other extravagant words they used. But Mademoiselle, standing by my side, and speaking caressing words in Saladin's ear, his beautiful head bent knowingly toward her to hear them, had a few half-whispered words for my ear alone:

"It was splendid! I have never seen anything so magnificent. I would not have missed seeing it for worlds, but not for ten thousand worlds would I be willing to look upon it again."

And I, feeling suddenly and wonderfully elated at the words of Miss Livingston's French "companion," could not resist looking straight into her eyes and asking boldly:

"Why not?"

To which daring question I received, as I deserved, no answer.

XI

I ENTER INTO THE SHADOW

MADEMOISELLE, at my bold question, had turned away with her head lifted and walked back into the house. I was ashamed, but I was also a little angry, and I hastened to make my adieux to Mrs. Livingston. To her remonstrance at my leaving so soon I answered that I had already delayed beyond my time and if I reached the ferry by twelve o'clock it would be by grace of Saladin's fleetness.

"I wish I could go with Sir Lionel, Aunt Kitty," said Master William, his eyes fixed wistfully on the horse.

"Into that fever-stricken city! Never!" exclaimed his aunt hastily, and then she added, as much I believe to console the boy as out of courtesy to me, "but we hope to have Sir Lionel with us often; perhaps he will bring Saladin back himself."

That I said I would gladly do, and Mademoiselle not appearing again to give me a chance for a last word of apology — or reproach, I was not quite sure which it would be — my farewells were soon spoken. My American friend was to remain through the hot noon hour at Liberty Hall for the sake of Bourbon Prince, but he accompanied me a little way on my journey to impress upon me once more that as soon as he found that his father was well enough, and affairs at home in a sufficiently cheerful state, he should expect a visit from me. On no other condition, he said earnestly, would he be at all willing to part with me now, and I was only too glad that I was to meet him again.

Although only a year or two older than I, he had always seemed to me much the elder, perhaps because of his great size, or perhaps from a certain gravity of demeanor, unusual in so young a man. I sometimes thought that it was because we were so unlike in size, in looks, in character and in temperament, that I found myself so strongly drawn to him. Now when he spoke a few generous words in praise of my horsemanship and again in strong approbation of my course in going back to nurse the fever-stricken, I felt myself flush with pleasure much as a boy might, at the approval of an older man whom he greatly admired.

Saladin was ambling quietly along by the side of Bourbon Prince quite as if they were old friends or as if he were imitating Bourbon's good behavior. Young horses are much like young men, and a good example is a good thing for them. Saladin learned much from Bourbon Prince in that short ride.

When I had said good-by to my friend, and Saladin, no doubt, had said good-by to Bourbon, I pressed on through the hot noon-day to the ferry, glad enough that I had so fleet a horse, or I would never have made it, and, irksome as my engagement seemed to me, and little as I liked the man with whom it was to be kept, for those very reasons I would have been exceedingly sorry to fail in the keeping of it.

I had expected to have trouble with Saladin at the ferry in getting him aboard, and in keeping him there, and he did not disappoint me. It was a bad quarter of an hour for the ferryman and his three oarsmen, as well as for myself, before we got him sufficiently quieted down for a start. I stood at his head and talked to him all the way over and, since I had already discovered that he was of keen intelligence, that a lesson once learned was well learned, I believed that I would never have the same trouble again in getting him aboard a boat.

Three o'clock found me at the mayor's office in that Federal building my black guide of the day before had pointed out to me as the one where Washington was inaugurated as first President. It was now used as a City Hall, and I entered its doors with a feeling of veneration that amounted almost to awe as I thought of him who so short a time before had trod those corridors.

Mingled with that sensation was a strong shrinking from the task I was about to engage in. Had I been able to see what trouble and distress my entering those doors was to bring upon me I could not have felt a greater shrinking than I felt as my hand lifted the massive brass knocker and read over the door the simple inscription, "Office of the Mayor of the City of New York."

The fall of the heavy knocker waked the echoes in those deserted halls, but scarcely had the echoes died away, when Mr. La Force himself opened the door and stood before me with a smile intended, no doubt, to be cordial.

"Come in, Sir Lionel," he said with impressement. "You are promptness itself, and I cannot half express to you under what obligations you are putting both Mr. Livingston and myself by your ready proffer of aid in my dilemma."

I was glad he brought in Mr. Livingston's name, for the man's voice rang so false to me, and his glittering smile with its flash of white teeth and dull cold eyes above them, struck me as so insincere, that but for that name, the name of a man whom I had begun to idealize as a hero, I would have been ready to withdraw the "proffer" which I had never made; since in place of proffering, I had yielded a rather unwilling assent to his petition for aid.

But no doubt I was doing him an injustice. Every man could not have the frank, trust-inspiring countenance of my great-hearted friend from whom I had just parted. Perhaps it was only a difference of nationality which I could not fully comprehend; perhaps it was the inheritance, in the Anglo-Saxon, of many generations of national antipathy to the Gaul.

At any rate I could see at a glance that every arrangement had been made for my comfort. When I had taken my seat in a luxurious chair, indicated to me by Mr. La Force, I found at my elbow a little stand on which were arranged glasses, a decanter of port and another of Madeira, both glowing mellow through the clear crystal, a jar of cigars, a pipe, a bag of cut tobacco and a curiously inlaid box of finest Melton. Ready to my hand, also, was a little pile of books, some of them old favorites of mine from the pen of Mrs. Radcliffe and Mr. Richardson, but one, at least, by an author entirely unknown to me, an American, Mr. Brown by name, whose story "Wieland," my host assured me, was well worth reading.

"These are the arrangements I have made for your comfort during your two days of incarceration," said my host, indicating with a wave of his hand the books, wine and tobacco. "I hope when I meet you again you will be able to tell me that they have been successful. You can see for yourself that our windows face Broad Street, and you can feel for yourself the cool breeze that always comes up that street, straight from the bay."

The windows were wide open and through them was sweeping at that moment a miniature gale from the south, impregnated with the salt air of the sea. I could not but acknowledge to myself and to my host that what he had said of the mayor's office was true — I had found no place since reaching New York so delightfully cool.

Then Mr. La Force insisted that before introducing me to the duties of my new office I should join him in a biscuit and a glass of port, very old port, he said, brought over from his uncle's cellars in France.

I was quite ready for the glass of wine, since I was still somewhat exhausted from the heat, but to part of his speech I objected.

"Duties!" I exclaimed, "I thought there were to be no duties; that I was to sit here and read for a few hours each day merely to show any passer-by that there was someone in the office."

"You are quite right, Sir Lionel," he agreed, with his artificial smile that I had begun to detest; "there are no duties that could be called such, but it is just possible that one or two people whom I will name to you, and describe, will call for the payment of sums due them from the city, and I will have to show you where the money is kept and give you a statement of the amount on hand."

The blood rushed to my face. It had not entered into my thought that I would have anything to do with money, and paying city officials seemed to me like the smallest kind of clerk's work. I have no doubt I was unduly sensitive, but I answered haughtily:

"My breeding as an English gentleman, Mr. La Force, has not qualified me for a clerk's duties, and I must decline to act as such in your absence."

I could discover a dull red mounting slowly into the sallow cheek of the Frenchman, and with cause, I had to confess, but he hastened to reply very affably:

"I beg your pardon, Sir Lionel, I had no idea of asking you to act as a clerk. There may be a number of people presenting bills — though I hope you will not be often disturbed. To all such you need only say that I will be absent until the second day after to-morrow; that if they will call then I will see them. The two of whom I spoke are old pensioners, very faithful in their day, but feeble and worn-out now, and dependent upon the little pittance they receive at this office for their daily bread. They may not come either to-morrow or next day, but, if they should, I would not like them to be disappointed. Would you mind, in that case, handing them their little pensions? They will be enclosed in envelopes, inscribed with their names."

This put an entirely different aspect on the transaction: it was a deed of charity I was to execute, and not the performance of a clerk's duties. It also showed Mr. La Force in a more amiable light than I had hitherto regarded him, and I hastened to assure him that I should not mind it at all. I should, indeed, find only pleasure in such a commission.

He thanked me, over exuberantly, I thought, and then rose with a careless air of doing the only thing possible under the circumstances.

"Step with me into the inner office a moment, if you please, then, Sir Lionel," he begged, politely, "and I will show you the location of the envelopes and the other money in the vaults."

I had risen at his first motion, ready to accompany him, but at the word "money" I drew back.

"Is that necessary, Mr. La Force? I much prefer to know nothing about the money in the office."

"Yes, I think it necessary," he said gravely, but also very gently, as if he sympathized with my scruples. "In case of an emergency arising, which I do not anticipate, but for which it is well to be prepared, it would be quite necessary to have someone who knew the money's location and how to get at it. Unfortunately, of our three clerks, one is ill and the other two are on their vacations; there will be no one about the building but the janitor, who will call upon you at intervals to furnish you with fresh water and anything else you may need, and whom you can call, when you want him, by pulling the bell rope."

His explanation only made the matter appear worse to me.

"No one about the building!" I exclaimed angrily. "Do you mean to say I alone am to be held responsible for the safety of the city's money? What is to hinder an organized band of robbers, whose business it is to keep informed of such a state of affairs, from coming into the office, overpowering me, and helping themselves."

Mr. La Force smiled, a little superciliously, I thought.

"We have no 'organized bands of robbers' in this new country, Sir Lionel, but, of course," with a sneer ever so slight, but which I could not endure, "if Sir Lionel has fears for his personal safety I will try to find someone else to do Mr. Livingston this service, though I fear the hour is late."

The wretch knew that I was but a boy and a boy of so haughty a spirit as could ill brook his insinuations.

"Lead on, Mr. La Force," I said grimly, "though it still seems to me a very unusual and extraordinary proceeding to entrust the safety of the city's moneys to one man, unarmed and a stranger at that. But as to fears — I do not know them."

Mr. La Force was all suave compliance once more.

"Forgive me, Sir Lionel. I should have known better than to make such imputations against a British nobleman of your standing, and, indeed, I did not intend to make them. It was a slip in the form of speech. I must have intended to say 'scruples'; I could never associate you with an idea of fear."

I accepted his apology, as I needs must, and though I did not like the business at all, I went with him into the inner office, where he showed me a secret drawer in which he kept the keys to the vault, three in number, opening an outer door, an inner door and a second inner door respectively. The last door disclosed a deep closet with many drawers and compartments. He opened only four of these—in one lay pieces of gold and on the top of them a paper with the amount of gold in the drawer written upon it; in another lay bank notes with a similar piece of paper, and in a third, silver done up in dollar and ten-dollar packages. The fourth drawer held, among other papers, the two envelopes to be given to the two pensioners if they called.

I cannot describe how intensely distasteful this whole business was to me. I hardly glanced at the money or listened to him when he named the amount in each drawer, and I was in a great hurry to have the inspection over and done with. So, to do him justice, did he seem to be. But, just as he was about closing the last drawer with the quick turn of the lock that I had noted, as seeming to indicate either impatience or nervousness of some kind, I stopped him. An idea had flashed into my head.

"Mr. La Force," I said, "one moment, if you please. If you will allow me I will take those two envelopes and keep them in my own possession, then I will probably not be obliged to open the vault in your absence."

He demurred at first, and I think as much as he dared. "They were much safer in the vault. It was giving me unnecessary trouble and responsibility."

But I did not attempt to disguise my displeasure at his hesitation.

"You cannot think, sir," I said, and I have no doubt I spoke arrogantly, for the man began to seem to me like a cur. "You cannot think I could not be responsible for so small a sum. Write the amount on each envelope and if I lose them

I will replace them, but I will *not* open that vault in your absence."

He complied, finally, but with a very poor grace, and made a great point once more of showing me the secret of the hidden drawer where the keys to the vault were kept, and would have me attempt the manipulation of it myself that I might be sure to know how to open it if I should need the keys, but this I flatly refused to do.

"I shall not need them," I said curtly, "and if anyone comes who wants money I hope I shall have forgotten how to open the secret drawer, so that I may be able to tell them with a clear conscience that I cannot enter the vault."

Mr. La Force smiled, a little more perfunctorily than usual, if that were possible, and having now evidently no desire to detain me, and I being in haste to be gone, he politely showed me the door with a reminder, "On the morrow at ten!" and with effusive thanks for my kindness.

Saladin was waiting for me at the pavement, held by a groom from the City Tavern who had accompanied me to the Federal Hall. I had found a note awaiting me at the inn on my return from Liberty Hall inviting me to dinner at Richmond Hill at half past four — the Vice-president's dinner hour was a half hour later than Mr. Hamilton's, indicating, I suppose, a greater degree of ceremony, as befitted the Vice-president of the nation.

Richmond Hill was not so far away but that Saladin's winged feet would carry me there in half an hour. I had donned black satin and point lace before making my call on Mr. La Force, so that I was ready for dinner and had an hour at my disposal. I would ride on beyond Richmond Hill to the pretty village of Greenwich, and farther still if Saladin should prove fleet enough, and perhaps, with his great strides and leaps through the air, I could shake off the memory of that distasteful visit. Saladin was my good angel and by the time I had reached Richmond Hill, a much statelier mansion and a nobler park than the Grange, I was once more in the equable frame of mind befitting a dinner guest. And by the time I had spent the evening with my wonderful and gracious hostess, and the fascinating Vice-president, under the spell of whose magnetic voice and winning ways I was rapidly falling (though I found no one among the guests to take the place of the clever young Irving, the vivacious Miss Livingston, and — Miss Desloge) by the time the evening was over and I was flying through the dew-drenched air on Saladin's back, the stars throbbing and blazing above me as I had never seen them throb and blaze in our misty English sky, I had forgotten Mr. La Force with his hateful smile and his eyes with their white-rimmed pupils and black-lashed lower lids, which had begun to haunt me like the eyes of some evil beast of prey.

XII

THE GREEN MOREEN CHAMBER

I CONCLUDED that my distaste for the service that I had bound myself to in the mayor's office, and my worry as to its results, were both needless, when, at the end of the two days, promptly at three, Mr. La Force returned and I delivered over the office to his care, together with the two envelopes, which had not been called for.

For absolutely nothing had happened in those two days. At ten o'clock on each morning I had presented myself at the mayor's office, where the polite custodian of the place, a negro, of course, was awaiting me with smiling offers of service. From ten to three I sat alone with my cigar and my book, which proved more entertaining than I had hoped. I had not expected much from an American author, but Mr. Brown's "Wieland," though not equal in pathos to "Clarissa Harlowe" nor comparable in excitement to the "Mysteries of Udolpho," was yet fairly exciting, with its romantic seductions and elegant libertines and all the other thrilling elements of a corrupt society that our novelists, I have never quite understood why, love to dwell upon.

In all those two days while I was wrapped in the woes of Clara, not once was I interrupted by a caller; by nothing, indeed, more disturbing than my negro *valet de chambre* bringing me fresh drinking water or inquiring if there was anything he could do for me. I began to excuse Mr. La Force's smile at my "organized band of robbers." Indeed, I smiled at it myself and said something of the kind to him when I handed him back the two uncalled-for envelopes. There was a little flicker of his eyelid that I did not quite like, when I handed them back, but, then, there were many things about him that I did not quite like and this was one of the least of them. He was profuse again in his thanks and I was in haste to shake the dust of the office from me and be away to Cockloft Hall. Mr. Irving and Mr. Kemble were to meet me at the City Tavern at half past three and I stood not upon the order of my going with Mr. La Force.

I was riding Saladin as we three started on our madcap dash up Broadway and through Courtlandt Street toward the ferry to Paulus Hook. I was still in possession of the horse, because the day before I had received a note from William begging me to keep him at least through the fall months, and, by that time, possibly, after he had been through the thorough course of training he knew I would give him, he might be allowed to ride him; otherwise, he feared that Aunt Kitty would persuade his mother to do as all her friends advised — send him back to Monticello.

So Saladin was to be mine for some weeks, at least, and I had great joy in his possession. I accepted him the more readily since I knew there was much truth in what Mrs. Livingston had said; he was not fit for any boy's riding, but I was so proudly greedy of his beauty and spirit I believe I would have snatched at the chance offered me to possess him for a while even without such good excuse. At the ferry he showed his breeding by behaving like a gentleman. He trembled violently, but he did not refuse to walk the gang-plank. I stood by him to comfort him all the way across, and he seemed to appreciate it and to try to thank me for doing so in the pretty way he had first used to Miss Desloge, and was beginning now to use to me, by rubbing his soft muzzle gently up and down my arm. Irving and Kemble fastened their horses and stood by me admiring Saladin's many beauties and discussing his virtues and vices; but I was rapidly growing so fond of him that I was beginning to feel as many foolish mothers feel about their children, unwilling to acknowledge that he had any vices.

Cockloft Hall was on the Newark road, about a mile on the hither side of the village. It was in no sense a great place. There could not have been more than twenty acres in the grounds and the house was quite near the road, a short drive leading up to a honeysuckled porch at the entrance. The house itself was broad and low, fifty or sixty feet in front, and over the central part only was a second story. It stood on the banks of the Passaic and, in the rear of the house, orchards, hanging heavy with scarlet and gold apples and the crimson globes of peaches, sloped down to the river. I had only time to note so much when out from the house, whooping like wild Indians, raced half a dozen young men to meet us, and a negro boy came running around the house to take our horses.

Now I had known something of wild spirits and wild ways among young men at Oxford. I had seen deep drinking and high playing; I had seen men go mad with excitement over cards, and there was no kind of deviltry those Oxford men could not think of when they had had too much wine. But, in the first twelve hours I spent at Cockloft Hall, I saw more pure fun and frolic and wilder animal spirits than I had seen in my four years at Oxford, yet all was so amiable and gay; there was no quarreling, no heavy drinking; there was so much wit and sparkle with the fun that I began to think my American cousins the most charming people in the world.

"Let me present the Lads of Kilkenny to Sir Lionel Marchmont," said young Mr. Irving, as soon as Saladin gave me a chance to get off his back.

"The Nine Worthies of Manhattan, you mean, Jonathan," interposed a man whom I afterward learned was Mr. Irving's older brother Peter, making a grand salaam as he spoke. "I am glad to know you, Sir Lionel."

"The Doctor has made a little mistake, Sir Lionel," interposed a slender youth with the waving hair and dreamy eyes of a poet, "Not the Nine Worthies, but the Ancient and Honorable Order of Cocks of the Loft. I am Billy Taylor at your service, sir, and one of the least of the Cocks."

But here our host interrupted, "Just wait one moment, Ancients and Honorables, let us put it straight to start with. Sir Lionel, I present to you the ancient and learned Mr. Peter

Irving, best known as the Doctor. This is Mr. Paulding, our poet, who calls himself Billy Taylor; and the next man is Mr. Dick McCall, alias Ooromdates. You will recognize Sinbad, I am sure, known in polite society as Mr. David Porter, a true salt. That handsome man next is Mr. Henry Ogden, our Supercargo. I am sorry to say there are only seven of our Worthies present. Nuncle and Captain Greatheart, otherwise known as Mr. Henry Brevoort, Jr., and Mr. Ebenezer Irving are both out of town. Gentlemen, I propose that for to-night and to-morrow we make Sir Lionel one of our Ancient and Honorable Order."

I was taken into their order with shouts of welcome and a strong grip from every hand. That ceremony was performed on the honeysuckle porch, and as my host ushered me into the drawing-room (an imposing apartment richly furnished in the oriental manner, opening by wide doors at one end into a great dining-room and at the other into a library or smoking room), he appealed to his companions, "Well, lads, shall we give Sir Lionel the Green Moreen Chamber?"

There was a universal shout in response of "No, no, Patroon," and then out of the babel of tongues I caught three distinct suggestions:

"Give him the blue chintz chamber."

"Give him the pink chintz chamber."

"Give him the red silk chamber."

The Patroon laughed and turned to young Mr. Irving. "What do you say, Jonathan?"

"Give him the Green Moreen Chamber, by all means; Sir Lionel is no baby," said Mr. Irving.

"You know, gentlemen," said the Patroon courteously, "Jonathan's word is law with me." And then to me: "Sir Lionel, our quarters at Cockloft Hall are somewhat confined. As a rule we find it necessary to give every man a roommate, but since there are only eight of us to-night you can sleep alone unless you prefer company."

Now there had been something mysterious in the sound of the Green Moreen Chamber, and particularly had Mr.

Irving's dictum that I was "no baby" suggested the need of courage to a man sleeping in it. Was it haunted? Well, since Mr. Irving had put me there, I would choose Mr. Irving for a roommate. If there were any peril in occupying that chamber, he should share it.

When I said so to my host, my decision was greeted with a shout of delight, and Mr. Irving was, or pretended to be, quite crestfallen.

A curving staircase ascended from one end of the Chinese Room, as the drawing-room was called, but before showing me upstairs to the Green Moreen Chamber, the seven Worthies held a solemn conclave as to the name by which I should be known as long as I remained a member of their Ancient and Honorable Order. They settled on "The Knight of the Green Moreen," and when I suggested it might be more appropriate to call me "The Green Knight of the Moreen," they assented gravely, and added that, out of deference to my expressed wish they would call me "Green" for short, and "Green" I remained to those seven men as often as I met them and as long as I remained in America.

I liked it well, for though my title of Sir Lionel was not much of a title, yet I could not, probably, in any other way, have persuaded them to drop it on so short an acquaintance, and I should have had to call them Mr. Paulding, Mr. Irving, Mr. Ogden, etc., which makes always, I find, for formality and against good fellowship.

It had been half past three when we left the City Tavern. It was now six o'clock, and, being late August, the long shadows were on the grass and the sun was nearing its setting. My usual dinner hour had been half past three, but, owing to our impatience to be off, I had only secured a bite of luncheon after my return from Mr. Livingston's office, and I was beginning now to think of tea with longing and to hope that it might prove a more substantial meal than tea was generally supposed to be, and earlier than the usual half past seven or eight o'clock hour. I determined on an expeditious toilet and started with alacrity to follow Mr. Irving towards the curving staircase. But before I had reached the first step someone called:

"Hello, Green, what do you say to giving us a back before you go upstairs? You will have your work all to do over again if you get ready for supper now."

I did not, for a moment, recognize my new name nor did I recognize what was meant by "giving a back." But I was not left long in doubt, for my friend "Jonathan" turning quickly caught me by the arm and wheeled me right-about-face.

"Why, of course," he shouted. "Come along, Lads; come along, Green," and in five minutes I found myself in the shady orchard playing a more rough and tumble game of leap-frog than I had played since I was a boy at Clover Combe Court.

Now Irving and I were the two smallest members of this band of Worthies; Ogden and Porter were giants by comparison. It gave them great delight, therefore, when either of us was giving the back, to dig our noses down in the soft tan-bark of the path where we were playing, and, if they were giving the back, to so lift their broad shoulders as to make the straddling almost impossible. I was not prepared for it at first, and Ogden, who was the bigger man and the bigger joker of the two, made me ignominiously bite the dust on his first round over me, and by rising suddenly landed me in the middle of his broad back as I tried to go over him. Of course, both exploits were greeted with roars of laughter, and for one moment I thought perhaps they were guying me because I was British, and my temper, always quick to flash, began to rise. These Yankees should not have all the sport, I determined, and the next time the Supercargo came over me I was ready for him. As his hands touched my back I let myself go flat and over went the Supercargo, his great hulk turning a complete somersault and coming up with his long hair full of tan bark and sputtering out a great mouthful that he had taken in from his unexpected dive. This time the shouts of laughter were louder than at my discomfiture. I saw there was no international feeling here, and I was quickly restored to my good temper.

Still spitting and sputtering, the Supercargo shook his fist at me good-naturedly, "I 'll be even with you, Mr. Green," he shouted, and his friends began to warn me: "Look out for him, Green, when he gives you a back," and I was on the lookout for him.

Now Mr. Ogden was over six feet. His shoulders must have been very nearly six feet from the ground. I was good at a high vault and I made up my mind to make a running leap as nearly six feet as I could manage. If he did not rise it would carry me clean over his head; if he did rise I would land on his shoulders, where I hoped to land. And I did. He rose, as I expected him to, and I landed square on his shoulders and quickly clasped my legs about his neck. They told me afterwards that his amazement at this new kind of Sinbad was something to behold. I could not see it, of course, but I could feel it, and clutching his long hair with one hand I waved the other aloft in token of triumph. Then he began to shake his head and shoulders and try to dislodge me, but I but held the tighter, and when he shook and pranced too hard I had but to press my knees slightly on his jugular and grip his hair tighter to make him howl for mercy, while his comrades shrieked with delight.

When he found there was no getting rid of me in that fashion he started on a keen run, jumping and leaping as he ran, and I thought I had never found a cross country run over fences and ditches more exciting or half so exhilarating. The six Worthies were at our heels like a pack of hounds giving mouth at sight of quarry. I did not at first know what he was after but those behind me evidently did, for they began to call to the Supercargo to "Hold on!" "Don't be too funny!" and various other warnings and exhortations, the Patroon finally calling in stentorian tones with a ring of authority, "Put him down, Supercargo. Remember! he 's our guest."

"Put me down? He 'd like to but he can't," I called back impudently, and came near regretting my impudence, for at that moment we burst through a hedge of willows fringing a small lake or pond, and the Supercargo's intention became suddenly luminous to me. He paused for a moment to get his breath, and I ceased my jeering. I was not afraid of water but I did not care to go into it with the only suit of clothes I had brought with me on my back, and it began to look as if I might have to.

"Now, Sir Knight of the Green Moreen," he threatened, when he had recovered his breath sufficiently to allow him to speak between gasps, "will you get down off my back or shall I douse you in the water?"

"Just as you please, Mr. Supercargo," I answered coolly. "You know, of course, if I go you go too."

"Better to drown than to be choked to death," he growled. "Here goes, sir!" And with that he gave a mighty lunge forward.

I had to think quickly and to act quickly. As he sprang forward I unclasped my legs from his neck and leaped as nimbly backward. I do not think he intended going into the water; he intended nothing more than to give me a good scare. but the forward impetus of my backward spring was too much for his equilibrium, and he plunged heavily into the lake face down. The water was shallow and he was up again in a moment and splashing to the shore, laughing almost as heartily as the others, who were holding their sides and doubling up like jack-knives in their paroxysms of delight, but between his genial guffaws he was also vowing vengeance.

"I 'll catch you and douse you yet, you little Britisher!" he roared. And, "Run, Green, run!" they all shouted to me. "He means what he says."

"Run for the house and the Green Moreen Chamber," called Irving, and then, realizing perhaps, that I did not know where to find the Green Moreen Chamber, he sprang to my side, running neck and neck with me straight for the house, with the whole pack after us in full cry.

We were a well-matched team and it was soon evident we could easily outrun the others, but we did not slacken our pace until we had reached the house, dashed up the stairs, and found ourselves behind the bolted door of the Green Moreen Chamber.

Then Irving dropped on to the floor and rolled over and over, kicking his heels in the very ecstacies of mirth, and I sat down on the side of one of the two beds and grinned.

As we were dashing into the house we had nearly run against and knocked over an old man and woman, the man grinning in sympathy with our frolic, the woman making frantic gestures and calling something to us as we passed.

"Who were they?" I asked Jonathan when our first transports had subsided.

"It was Mammy and Daddy Jacobs, the old couple who live here and take care of the place," he answered, "and they, with the negro boy Pompey, who took our horses, form the whole establishment. You must not expect much service at Cockloft Hall."

"I am better content without in a delightful bachelor's den like this," I answered. "It's the best I have ever known. It's the real thing — absolute freedom."

"Absolute license might express it better. I wonder sometimes we don't shock poor old Mammy Jacobs into her grave. Daddy seems to enjoy it."

"What was it the old woman was calling to us?" I asked.

"I think, probably, she was trying to tell us supper was ready, to stop our fooling and come down."

"That sounds good to me," I said. "I will get ready immediately," and sprang up with alacrity to put my word in action, when it occurred to us both at the same moment to wonder what had become of our pursuers. Irving went to the window to reconnoiter and called to me to come quick and look. Under a spreading oak not far from the house the six were seated in solemn conclave. As they discovered us looking out, the Patroon arose, waved a flag of truce and coming up under our window announced that since supper was ready, or rather, as Mammy Jacobs said "spoiling," an armistice had been agreed upon, but that after supper the Knight of the Green Moreen would be tried in the Octagon on a charge, preferred against him by the Supercargo, of assault with intent to kill. Fifteen minutes would be allowed for a supper toilet, and at the beating of the gong the Patroon would expect his guests to present themselves in the Chinese Room. He would like to know if these terms were acceptable to the Knight of the Green Moreen.

"Perfectly so," he was assured, particularly the last one, for the Knight of the Green Moreen was beginning to feel himself a famished night of the Rueful Countenance.

When, fifteen minutes later, we were all assembled in the Chinese Room, I was astonished to find as orderly and courteous a set of young gentlemen as might be found at any lady's dinner party. Nor did they grow wildly hilarious at the supper table, which I thought the most delicious meal and the oddest I had ever sat down to. There were young chickens cooked in a most wonderful manner with a rich brown gravy poured over them and served with a flat cake — a "fritter" — made of the grated green corn — whole ears of which I had found on every dinner table since my landing, to be eaten from the cob in a most outlandish fashion, but I must confess most toothsome to the taste. Then there were wonderful little scones, white as snow and light as feathers, and served so hot that the butter melted as it touched them; and a dish they called "creamed potatoes" that transformed that commonplace vegetable into food fit for the gods. Then there was wonderful coffee, so clear an amber until the rich cream turned it a golden brown, so excellent for strength, so exquisite for flavor as I had not conceived coffee could be, and served in big breakfast-cups which were yet too small to satisfy the appetite for such Olympian nectar. And for the sweets after the meal, there were luscious peaches cut up and swimming in golden cream, and cake of a rich and toothsome quality. There was no wine served at table but, perhaps, because I had had but little dinner and much violent exercise, no meal I had ever sat down to had seemed quite so satisfying.

Somewhat to my surprise, also, after what Irving had told me of the *menage,* it was served in a most orderly and *comme il faut* fashion. The old man, Jacobs, and the young negro Pompey acted as butler and footman, and though there was much gay talk and much laughter over the Supercargo's bath and my ride on his shoulders, it was all very decorus and seasoned with the sparkle of wit and epigram.

When I had a chance to say to Mr. Irving that I was not prepared for such orderly state at table after the violence of the hilarity preceding it, he told me the Patroon would have it so. Freedom to the verge of license everywhere else, but at table each man must remember his breeding or he could not remain a guest at Cockloft Hall.

The after-glow of the sunset, soft and rosy, had been in the sky when we sat down to supper and the long windows of the dining-room open to the west had given us a view of it, and of the heavily-laden orchards on the slopes of the hill and the gleam of lake and river between the trees. They had also given entrance to a soft evening breeze, very grateful after the heat of the day. The candles were lighted when we sat down but there had been enough of daylight to dim their radiance. By the time the after-glow had faded and the candles were burning their best, the moon that had been a slender crescent on the night of the dinner at the Grange was hanging like a silver lantern over the top of the tallest tree in the orchard, and though it was still a concave moon it could no longer be called a crescent, and it was shedding an inviting luster on the black mass of foliage below it.

The Patroon rose in his place. "Wine and cigars in the Octagon, gentlemen, by the light of the moon, and afterward the trial by jury," he said, and led the way out by the long windows to a porch at the rear, and from thence through the orchard to an octagon-shaped kiosk or summer house standing on an eminence between the shores of the little lake on one side and the gently flowing waters of the Passaic on the other.

My attention had been too entirely concentrated on my efforts to save myself a ducking when I had visited the lake shore before supper to notice the Octagon. I thought now it looked very fair and lovely in the moonlight, graceful in shape and built of finely carved stone, its broken image reflected in the shimmering waters of the little lake at its foot. It was even more attractive on the inside than from the outside. Wide windows filled each of the sides looking toward the lake of the one large room in the interior, with mahogany window-seats built in below them, piled high with cushions. Some, at least, of these window-seats served also for lockers, for I saw our host open one and take out cushions and a rug to make one of the seats more comfortable. There were a few easy chairs and mahogany stands holding glasses and smoking implements scattered about the room, which was lighted only by a dim lantern suspended from the apex of the vaulted roof and by the pale moonlight on the outside. The Passaic was a tidal river and the tide being now near the flood and pouring through a sluice just below my window into the little lake filled my ears with the pleasant sound of rushing waters.

To my surprise I had hardly taken my seat when young Ogden came over and sat down beside me. I certainly bore him no ill will for our little escapade of the afternoon, but I had hardly expected him to bear me so much good will as to seek me out.

"Green," he began at once, "I want to acknowledge myself vanquished in a fair fight and shake hands on it. I don't like to be beaten, and especially by a little fellow of half my weight, but I can't help admiring your pluck and spirit."

"It's generous of you to say so," I answered, giving him my hand.

"Yes, I think it is, rather," he grinned; "it's usually the victor who can afford to be generous and not the vanquished But I want to say something else. I acknowledge I've been whipped but you know this is not the end of it. Now if you lose out in the trial, if you are condemned, I don't want you to think that I have anything to do with it and lay it up against me. I shall be as helpless as you—it all lies with the judge and jury."

"All right," I laughed. "I'll owe you no grudge however it turns out. And even if I should be condemned I don't suppose the sentence will be anything very dreadful."

"I don't know about that." He shook his head ominously.

"But anyhow you have the true spirit of sport and I like you; a thing I never expected to say of any Briton." And with that he threw his arm over my shoulder and began to chaff me about my size and "pluck," as he called it, in so good-natured a way that I very soon shook off my awkwardness at being treated so affectionately and began also to discover a real liking for my big adversary.

While we had been talking I had seen our host open a door in the floor and descend to a subterranean cellar. He returned now laden with cobwebby bottles, and, while the moon still flooded the room, for half an hour we smoked and drank some fine old wine and told or listened to some very good stories (Irving, Kemble and Paulding were the story-tellers), with as much decorum as our dignified elders might have done. Then as the moon sank behind the hill and the room darkened, Kemble called on Ogden to help him, and lighting the candles in sconces around the walls until the room was a blaze of light he summoned the court to assemble and my trial began.

Now I have listened to many trials since. I have rather a fondness for that sort of thing, but I have sometimes thought that never have I listened to keener pleading, sharper cross-questioning of witnesses (of whom dozens were called, the Supercargo, Ooromdates and Sinbad answering each to a dozen different names in turn), nor have I often listened to a sentence more learnedly or impressively pronounced than was Judge Kemble's that night. As prisoner I was allowed to make a plea for myself, and the judge, in referring to it, was kind enough to call it "most eloquent, most impassioned, and most persuasive." But it was the speeches of the two learned counsel, Mr. Irving, for the defense, and Mr. Paulding, for the prosecution, that were the great efforts of the evening. Mr. Irving's speech, in particular, glittered with imagery, sparkled with wit, and blazed with eloquence, but all to no effect. The solemn jury, "twelve able-bodied, fair-minded citizens," the judge called them (represented in the person of the Doctor), returned a unanimous verdict after retiring five minutes for consultation with itself, of "Guilty of felonious assault with intent to kill," and recommending the prisoner to "Justice without mercy."

I was quite sure what my sentence would be. I knew what I would have made it, had I been judge. I was quite prepared, therefore, to hear it delivered in blood-curdling tones: "To be ducked three times in his night garments in the same lake into which he had artfully and wickedly caused the Supercargo to plunge."

And then, less solemnly:—

"Owing, however, to the youth and condition of the prisoner, a stranger in a strange land, the Court is inclined to exercise some leniency and will therefore impose certain conditions which the prisoner may be able to turn to his advantage. The execution of this sentence is limited to the hours between midnight and sunrise. Should the officers entrusted with its execution not be able to find the prisoner between those hours, or should he offer such resistance when they came to arrest him in bed in the Green Moreen Chamber as to prevent their putting the sentence into execution between the aforesaid hours, then the prisoner, under the rules of the Ancient and Honorable Order of Cocks of the Loft, should go Scot-free."

"And now, gentlemen," the judge rose to his feet as he spoke, his flowing robes of office (a red damask curtain from one of the windows), and his full-bottomed wig (a sheepskin mat from the floor), lending him great majesty of appearance and making him, indeed, truly awful to look upon, so that the prisoner quaked in his shoes before him; "gentlemen, the hour is ten minutes before eleven; by midnight the prisoner is expected to be sound asleep in his bed in the *Green Moreen Chamber* and fully arrayed for bed *in night garments only.* I adjourn this court *sine die* and at once that we may snatch a few minutes of much needed repose in preparation for the arduous duties that no doubt await us between the hours of midnight and sunrise."

We walked up to the house very amicably; I between Kemble, the judge, and Irving, my counsel. Two of our number were carrying lanterns, for now that the moon was down it was pitch black under the trees of the orchard.

"This is the end of it, I suppose," I said, speaking carelessly, or trying to, as if I felt no doubt of it. "The sentence, of course, was a joke."

"Not at all," spoke Kemble and Irving in a breath, and the Patroon went on to say in his gravely courteous fashion:

"My dear Sir Lionel, there is no joke about it. I hope you can swim, for in all human probability you will have at least three opportunities to practice your stroke before morning."

Now old Captain Joshua of *The Flying Fish* at Clover Combe always said no sea gull could be more at home on the water than I, but I did not think it a good time to boast of my powers in that direction.

"And suppose I cannot swim?" I asked gravely. "Do you really propose to throw a helpless man into the water?"

"We certainly do not propose to drown you, Sir Lionel," with a smile, revealed not so much by the uncertain light of the lanterns as by his tones. "If you can't swim, perhaps you can wade, and I 'll advise the boys to throw you in where the water is shallow."

"Where you threw me in this afternoon," called Mr. Ogden from just behind us, who had been listening to us.

"Thank you! But—don't you first have to catch your hare?"

"Oh! of course, but he 's as good as caught already."

"You mean he does n't stand much chance in defending himself, one against seven?"

"Yes, and I hope he won't try it. He 'll come off much better by simply yielding."

"That may be good Yankee philosophy but it 's not British. Fight or flee, but never yield. Suppose I run away?"

"You 'll be caught. Remember the rules are that you are to stay in bed until the first stroke of twelve."

"I 'll remember. What happens on the first stroke of twelve?"

"You 'll see," said Ogden chuckling, and then the Patroon interposed:

"But remember, Supercargo, it is only between midnight and sunrise. From the moment the first beam touches the gilt deer on top of the Octagon, Sir Lionel is a free man."

"And Patroon," returned Mr. Ogden, "please tell Sir Lionel that my ducking this afternoon has really nothing at all to do with his ducking to-night; that he could not have escaped it even had there been no leap-frog this afternoon."

"Sir Lionel," said the Patroon gravely, "it is a law of our Order that the first night that anyone sleeps in the Green Moreen Chamber he must be taken out and ducked three times in the lake. It is a law of the Medes and the Persians and changeth not; winter or summer, seed time or harvest, the man who sleeps there for the first time is doomed."

A ray from the lantern illuminated strongly at that moment the face of young Irving, and my own as well, I suppose, for as I glanced at him reproachfully he colored and turned away, tried to say something and broke down stammering; or could it have been he was laughing?

"*Et tu Brute!*" I muttered between my teeth for his ear only, "is this why you advised putting me in the Green Moreen Chamber?"

He heard me and murmured in reply:

"I loved not Cæsar less but the traditions of our Order more. The Lads of Kilkenny must have their sport."

"At my expense! I will remember it some day when you come to Clover Combe Court. You shall sleep in a Green Moreen Chamber and may the gods hasten your coming!"

XIII

IN THE OCTAGON KIOSK

IT was less than an hour we had for sleep, but there was no thought of sleep with either of us as we lay in bed talking, in the genial strain that I had already discovered Mr. Irving was sure to give to any conversation in which he had a part. We were waiting for that stroke of twelve when Mr. Ogden had said I would see what would happen, and in waiting we were running up and down a long and varied gamut of topics.

Now it would hardly be possible that a family who had dwelt for so many hundreds of years, as mine had dwelt, on the very borders of Wales, could escape a strain of Welsh blood. Mine had not escaped. A beautiful Glengower had brought into the family, a hundred and fifty years before, along with her Welsh beauty some Welsh characteristics, so marked and of such persistent quality that one or more of the Welsh traits had cropped out in each succeeding generation. My aunt, who had more of the Welsh blood than I, and of which she was justly proud, always insisted that I had several marked characteristics of the race, and one of them was a peculiar tendency at any moment, when it might be least expected or most inopportune, to hark back to the past. I might be in the midst of the most stirring adventure — the present would slip from me and I would be dwelling mournfully or tenderly on scenes of my childhood or earlier youth.

Now as we lay in our beds talking across to each other in the dark, gayly and boisterously, almost, of the adventures of the afternoon and evening, suddenly, without warning of any kind, I was in memory racing through the sweet Devonshire lanes with Rosie Dufour; I on Black Tom and she on Snowflake, our two ponies that we regarded as the most spirited and gallant steeds in the world, and of whose virtues we each vaunted boastingly to the other. Snowflake was the swifter of foot but Black Tom could take a ditch or a hurdle or even a low hedge without flinching, and not the M. F. H. himself — who happened to be my father — was prouder of his mount than I of my black hunter, as I called him.

"I will race you and beat you, Lion," Rosie called back defiantly to me. She was already well in the lead, her red curls floating behind her and her saucy freckled face turned toward me with that triumphant glow in the brown eyes I never could stand.

"I 'll race you down Clover Lane!" I shouted in return.

Now there were at least two ugly ditches in Clover Lane where the men were at work draining the south meadows, and Rosie was afraid of the ditches and I knew it.

"No; I don't like Clover Lane," pouted Rosie; "I 'm going up the Combe Moor Road."

"Ha! You 're afraid!" I taunted, and then I saw the little freckled face turn pale under the freckles and the brown eyes grow somber.

"I 'm afraid of nothing, Lion Marchmont! You can't lead anywhere I will not follow!"

Bravado was in the defiant tone, but a little quaver on the last word betrayed her.

I relented for a moment, but the domineering spirit natural to a young male prevailed.

"Come on, then, we 'll see, Miss Great-heart!" I called with a sneer, and wheeled Black Tom.

I was in the lead then, for we had been headed for the Combe Moor Road, and Clover Lane lay quite in the opposite direction. I did not look back and I spurred Black Tom to his utmost for I heard Snowflake's hoofs gaining on us. She passed us not a dozen lengths before we reached the first ditch, and as she flashed by I caught a glimpse of Rosie's white face, and terror seized me for her terror.

"Stop, Rosie!" I shouted; "Snowflake 's sure to balk."

But Rosie only shook her head and in a moment I saw her put Snowflake at the ditch, and Snowflake refuse at first, but at the touch of Rosie's whip and the lift of her bridle make a half-hearted attempt which resulted, as all half-hearted attempts are sure to result — in failure.

Over went pony and rider into the ditch. Dismay, terror, a horrible fear clutched at my heart as I sprang from Black Tom and leaped down into the ditch, at the bottom of which lay Rosie, white as death, and dead I verily believed.

I was only a little boy, not more than eight or nine, and small for my age. And though Rosie was little more than a baby, six or seven, I suppose, she was a big load for my small arms, though my sturdy legs pulled us safely up the steep sides of the ditch, gasping for breath and uttering shrill cries for help between my gasps.

At my cries the men came running from their work in the meadow and carried Rosie into one of the cottages not far away, where it was soon discovered no bones were broken and that she was only stunned by her fall. And Snowflake, having scrambled out of the ditch herself, also unhurt, and waiting patiently for her mistress at the cottager's door, we soon had Rosie on her back and jogging slowly homewards.

With my arm through Black Tom's bridle and clutching Snowflake's near the bit, I walked by Rosie's side, a very penitent and very much awed little boy, for I had never seen anyone in a faint before and I could not forget how I had thought her dead, nor could I forget that my taunts had driven her to dare the leap we both knew Snowflake could not make. Where the lane sank into cool shadow overhung by high hedges in full and fragrant bloom, I brought Snowflake to a standstill, and looking up at Rosie with a beating heart and a shamed face whose hot flushes I can still feel, I begged her to kiss me and forgive me for being so rude — which she did very sweetly, with a rosy face and just the least little flicker, quickly gone, of that triumphant glow in the brown eyes that I did not like.

Now why all this should have flashed into my mind as I lay in bed talking to Irving of the ducking I had given young

Ogden; while I waited nervously for the stroke of twelve, I do not know, except that, according to my aunt, it was my Welsh inheritance to have the past flash in on the totally unrelated present.

It only required a half dozen seconds for memory to put the whole scene vividly before me, and in a very few minutes with the garrulousness of youth I had told it all to Irving. I had already discovered that he was keen for any hint of romance and I need not have been surprised at the way he took my little tale.

"By Jove, man!" he exclaimed as I finished my recital; "what has become of that Rosie Dufour? You ought to marry her some day to make a fitting sequel to the romance."

"Marry a freckled-face, red-headed baby!" I answered contemptuously. "My wife must be beautiful if I ever have one."

"She 's not a baby still, I suppose," he retorted, "and if you have n't seen her lately she may be as beautiful as Mademoiselle Desloge for all you know. I 've no doubt Miss Desloge was a red-headed little girl herself ten years ago." Then he added quite seriously:

"I 've been in love with half a dozen beautiful young women and probably will be with half a dozen more, but if ever I marry I believe it will be a little girl not yet thirteen, the sister of one of my friends and the sweetest child the sun ever shone on."

He spoke so earnestly he roused my interest, and I would have liked to make him talk more of the child, for whatever he said always sounded to me like a story from a book, but before either of us could utter another word, from a tall old clock on the stair landing near our door there came a deep bell-like sound.

It was the first stroke of twelve and promptly at the first stroke, I *saw,* as Mr. Ogden had said I would. I was in bed, according to order, and also, according to order, fully unclad, wearing only my night garments. But I had placed my boots conveniently beside my bed, and also beside my bed a Chinese dressing robe of flowered and embroidered silk, belonging, young Irving said, to the Patroon, and which I found hanging up in a wardrobe in the room.

The Green Moreen Chamber was at the southwest corner of the house. One of its windows gave on to the roof of the dining-room, and over this roof hung the limbs of a great cherry tree. I had noticed this tree by daylight and wondered whether it would not be an easy feat to leap from the roof into the heart of it, and I had come very near inquiring of the Patroon whether it had ever been done, and asking his permission to try it sometime. I was glad now that I had not spoken.

It seemed that, according to the rules of the game, Irving was allowed to take no active part in helping me, neither was he required to take part against me, and I was quite sure that I could count at least on a friendly silence from him. Promptly at the first stroke of twelve there was a tremendous thundering at the door, accompanied by demands to open it. I listened for a moment. I could detect but the voices of four men at the door, most likely the other two were on guard outside should I attempt to escape by the window. I sprang from bed, seized my boots and the dressing gown in one hand, and with a whispered request to Irving not to open to them for five minutes, I ran to the window. But at the sill I paused for a moment and turned back to whisper once more in Irving's ear not to be worried if he saw or heard nothing of me until sunrise.

"But let the others worry all they will," was my parting injunction, as I sprang through the window, ran noiselessly down the steep roof, and made a flying leap into the tree, which was more of a hazard than it might have been otherwise, since the tree was only a dim shadowy mass in the darkness, and I could not possibly tell where I would land.

But my landing was better than I could have hoped for. My feet struck a solid bough and my right hand clutched some overhanging branches and steadied me as I alighted, and it was only the work of a moment to clamber swiftly down the close-set branches to the ground. Moreover, I was in luck in still another particular. I had not been wrong in deciding that there were only four at the door and two were probably outside, and had I delayed my escape a half minute longer the crash of my landing in the tree must have inevitably been heard by the two who now came running up silently to watch for me under its branches. It had taken them the two minutes I had consumed in my escape, to run down the stairs, get out of the house and around it to the cherry tree in the rear, and by the time they reached it I was securely hidden behind a dense clump of lilacs some twenty feet away.

In scrambling down the tree I had continued to cling to my dressing gown and boots, seized as I sprang from bed. Now while Sinbad and Supercargo — they were the two who had been sent to guard the cherry tree — were carefully examining each branch and twig by the light of the lanterns they carried, I hastily drew on my boots and wrapped myself in the dressing gown. It was of dark green with flowers embroidered in black and lighter greens, nothing could be better to cover my white garments and render me invisible against the background of trees and shrubbery.

Nothing could have been more fortunate for me, also, than that they stayed long enough under the cherry tree to give me a chance, by the light of their lanterns, to map out my route. The other four had come down from the Green Moreen Chamber and joined them. There were six under the cherry tree now, but only three carried lanterns. I could have wished they had all been armed with them, then it would have been an easy matter to keep out of their way, but in the meantime, by the light of the three, I was discovering the next clump of bushes behind which I might hide, and making sure of the points of the compass, since I was not familiar enough with the grounds to know where to find the shrubbery, nor could I be quite certain, in the dark, which way the orchard and the summer-house lay.

For my path lay through the orchard to the Octagon. It had come to me in a flash, while the Patroon was still pronouncing my sentence, that in that very spot I would stow myself away so comfortably and so securely that I believed it would take a good fox-hound to nose me out. I remembered the Patroon lifting one of those window seats and disclosing a locker long enough and deep enough for my five feet nine to curl up in very comfortably, and piled with cushions and rugs that would serve both for concealment and for a luxurious bed.

I think it must have taken me nearly two hours to make that short journey from the house to the kiosk. If I had been alone in the wilderness, with hostile savages bent on taking my life, skulking behind every tree and bush, the perils of my situation could not have seemed graver to me, nor I more keenly alive to the necessity for skill, caution and courage in escaping them. Later on in my American stay I had some experience of such perils with real savages, and I think they demanded no greater exercise of all my faculties than did that wild and foolish play that night.

As I said before, it would have been easier if all of those who were scouring the grounds in search of me had carried lanterns, then I could at least tell that I was not falling into ambush. But only three carried lanterns and it was a comparatively small matter to keep out of the way of their bobbing lights, but sometimes, in making a detour to avoid them I was stopped and turned to stone for the moment, by a stealthy sound that I knew must be some living creature creeping on me in the dark. My only hope was to remain absolutely motionless until the stealthy movements had passed on and beyond me, knowing that it would be only a matter of good fortune if they did not stumble over me in the blackness.

In making these detours to avoid the bobbing lanterns I lost my points of the compass, and there was no star in the heavens to guide me back to them. Twice I found myself once more under the walls of the house; once I passed the stables, which were in the opposite direction from the kiosk, and thought I heard Saladin whinnying as I passed. I stopped a moment when I heard the sound. What could be better than to get hold of Saladin! Once on his back I could scour the country roads until daylight and at sunrise come riding leisurely up to the house with all danger of a ducking well over.

But two considerations deterred me from acting on the suggestion: one was the difficulty of getting Saladin out and finding saddle and bridle, or at least bridle, in an unfamiliar stable in the dark. Even if the stable was not locked and I could get into it, I would, no doubt, raise such excitement among the horses as to betray my whereabouts. The other consideration was even more powerful: At this time of year it was daylight a full hour before sunrise and I must be galloping around the country in night clothes with a gorgeous mandarin robe floating out behind me, a spectacle for men and gods, the laughing stock of every milk-maid, the jeer of the seven Lads of Kilkenny when I should come riding up into their midst, and a just butt for their ridicule through the rest of my stay in America.

That settled it. I stole away from the stables and once more started on my devious course, my unprofitable search for a phantom kiosk, which I began to believe existed only in my dreams.

Once I nearly ran into the arms of the big Ogden. He was standing still, so that I heard no sound to warn me of his nearness, but when I was so close to him that I could have touched him with an extended arm, he doubtless heard my stealthy movements for he called out: "Who goes there? Friend or foe?" I ran swiftly back a few steps and then stood stock still, and after calling again, "Who goes there?" he evidently thought he had been mistaken and moved on again.

But what worried me most was that I could not find the kiosk; that I was continuously going about in a circle. I had pictured myself taking a comfortable nap in that well-cushioned locker while the weary "Worthies" were scouring field and orchard for me, but I began to fear that I was to be the weary wanderer through the livelong night, only to be caught at dawn. When I had about given up in despair and was just deciding that I would sit down where I was, that the kiosk was more likely to come to me than I to the kiosk, my ear caught a sound that I recognized. It was the sound of rushing water. The tide was going out and the water was pouring through the sluice-way from the lake into the river. The kiosk was not so far away as I had supposed and now I had a sure guide to lead me to it.

But my troubles were not quite over. Just as I had so nearly reached it that it was looming up before me as a dim and shadowy shape out of the blackness, out of that same blackness from opposite directions came two bobbing lanterns. They entered the Octagon and no doubt made a thorough search for me inside. They came out again in a few minutes and I was congratulating myself once more on my luck that they had made their search of the Octagon before I had hidden in it, and now, no doubt, it was my safest hiding place, when to my chagrin, the two seated themselves on the steps of the building with the air of intending to spend the rest of the night there, and began to discuss all the possible and impossible places in which I could have taken refuge.

I was so near to them that I could easily distinguish every word and I almost laughed aloud more than once in my hiding-place behind the trunk of an apple tree where I heard them recounting some of their experiences in their night search, and I gloated exceedingly over getting the better of them, when I heard one of them say, "I would not mind so much, but to be beaten by a *Britisher,*— Billy Taylor, we *must* get that fellow before sun-up."

Then they fell to considering ways and means again, I growing momently more impatient, for I dared not move from behind my tree, since their lanterns gave sufficient light to discover me, and should another of the hunters happen to come up in my rear I was certainly lost.

I might have fumed away for the rest of the night but for a lucky chance. Suddenly out of the stillness there was an excited roar from Ogden not very far away:

"I've got him! I've got him!"

The two on the steps, Sinbad and Billy Taylor, rushed off in the direction of Ogden's voice, and I only waited long enough to be sure I was beyond the circle of light from their lanterns to make a dash from behind my tree for the kiosk steps, through its door, which stood wide open, and straight for the nearest window seat. It proved to be a locker, as I had hoped, and it did not take many seconds to arrange myself among the cushions in its depths, and draw a rug over me in such fashion as to cover all but my head and to allow at a moment's notice of drawing it over my head, also, should the necessity arise.

Fortunately, August nights are cool and every window and door in the kiosk was wide open, or I never could have stood my close quarters and my rugs and pillows. I propped the lid of the locker open a little way by inserting the corner of a cushion near the hinges and arranging the others for my head so as to bring my nose close to the opening, I decided that I was thoroughly comfortable and as safe as I could hope to be, and there would be no harm in taking a little nap. My ride from New York through the hot afternoon, our rough and tumble play before supper, the trial, and that midnight prowl in the dark with every nerve stretched to its utmost tension, had left me overcome with weariness. I listened for a few minutes to the sound of voices in the distance which now was a sound of laughter and jeers,—and I thought I understood the jeers: that Ogden had caught Irving, who was just my size, and thought that it was I, and Irving, with his love of jest, had let him think so. Listening to the distant sounds and laughing to myself over my explanation of them, they gradually grew dim and hazy to my senses, and before I knew it I was fast asleep.

I do not know how long I slept, I was roused by voices and footsteps on the kiosk steps. Under the lifted lid of my locker I could distinctly see the chairs and tables in the room and the white face of the window opposite. It was daylight then, though still, perhaps, a long way from sunrise. I softly drew in the cushion that held up the lid of my locker, and let it gently down in its place, as the steps and voices entered the Octagon.

The voices came to me slightly muffled since I had dropped the lid, but I could easily distinguish the words.

"Well, I for one am dead tired; not a step further will I go. Where in *creation* can the fellow be?"

It was Ogden's voice and I could hear him, as he spoke, throw his great hulk heavily into a leathern chair that creaked with his weight.

"I was sure we would find him when it grew daylight," the Patroon's calm voice indicated disappointment and some concern. "I hope no harm has come to him, but if he is hidden anywhere about the place I think, Lads, we will have to confess ourselves outwitted."

"Yes, confound him! Seven against one, and a Briton at that! I would like to kick myself and all you fellows, too." Sinbad spoke gloomily, and my friend Irving laughed.

"Cheer up, Sinbad!" he urged genially. I believe he was glad I had escaped, his tones were so cheerful. "Patroon, give him a glass of port, he needs inspiriting."

"We all do; wait a minute, Lads," and I heard the cellar door opening, the descending steps and a few minutes later the cheerful clink of glasses, and wished with all my heart the sun would hurry up and touch the gilt deer on top of the kiosk (though how I was to tell when it did, I could not see), that I might take my share of their good cheer.

For fully fifteen minutes there was such a happy confusion of voices that I could only occasionally understand what they were saying; and in the meanwhile I was suffocating. I was compelled finally to lift the locker lid a tiny crack for a breath of air.

But out of the confusion I heard presently very distinctly Sinbad's voice in reply to someone:

"Yes, Billy Taylor and I went through every locker and through the wine cellar with lanterns; he's not in here."

"How long ago?" asked Ogden.

"About two hours ago, I should think."

"Plenty of time for him to have got in since."

"All right, I'll look again if you say so."

My lid went softly down and I drew the rug over my head and put the cushions I had been using for pillows on top of me. A great slamming of lids with accompanying exclamations announced the search. He opened so many he must have come to mine last. He threw the lid up wide and prodded down into a cushion.

"Nothing here — it's my opinion he's gone back to New York," he answered.

I had not dared to breathe as he prodded the cushion; now I drew a breath of relief and thought "I am safe." Then a horrible idea struck me: I had not heard him *put down that lid.* It was still wide open and the slightest movement on my part would certainly be discovered by some of those sharp-eyed fellows outside. I did not even dare to breathe and I was suffocating under the rug and the cushions and, as is natural, because I did not dare to move, I felt that I must, or die. I began really to be in agony; perspiration was starting from every pore, a cold sweat of anguish. I could not have held out many minutes longer, and I was beginning to contemplate surrendering at last after my long night of struggle and take my ducking. Why not? At this hour it would be nothing more than a morning plunge and the thought of the cool waters of the lake began to seem infinitely attractive. I believe I would have yielded but for the feeling that it was the honor of old England that was at stake. I must, for her sake, hold on to the end like grim death.

And grim death I had about concluded it was going to be when, like a reprieve at the gallows, Billy Taylor's musical voice called from the doorway:

"Boys, the sun is shining on the gilt deer!"

"It's all up," groaned Ogden. "Beaten, ye gods!"

An ominous and dismal groan greeted his words.

I had only waited to assure myself that this was not a ruse they were playing on me, that if I were in hearing I might discover myself. At the groan I flung cushions and rugs from me and wrapping my dressing gown around me, stepped from the locker.

"Good morning, gentlemen," I said coolly.

Every man sprang to his feet and stared at me as if he took me for a ghost.

"Patroon," I asked, as no one spoke, "would you mind offering me a glass of your fine old port? I've been asleep so long I need something to wake me up."

"Done!" ejaculated Ogden, and sank limply into a chair. "He's the only man that ever slept in the Green Moreen Chamber for the first time without getting a ducking. And he a *Britisher!*"

XIV

MR. LA FORCE MAKES AN INSINUATION

IF my first night at Cockloft Hall was a night of "storm and stress," as the German poets would call it, nothing could have been more peaceful than the day that followed that night, and the evening that brought that day to a close.

In lieu of the ducking they were to have given me, we all plunged into the salt waters of the lake for a morning bath and then wended our way through the orchards to the house, the dew lying heavy on the long grass and that freshness in the air that I have often noted as peculiar to August mornings, as of a world just born again, and that sets my blood to tingling in my finger tips.

I remember stooping to pick up a great apple under a tree whose boughs hung heavy with the golden globes and where the grass beneath was starred with them. Whether it was my long night of arduous adventures, or whether it was the spicy air of the August morning, or whether it was the apple itself, I have never tasted anything quite so sweet and juicy and luscious as that great fruit. A "pound sweeting," Mr. Kemble called it, and I thought it well named, both for size and quality.

"It was half-past five of the morning and the long shadows were lying on the closely cropped turf between the orchard and the house, and a songbird was warbling a richer and more melodious note than I had often heard so late in the summer. Mr. Irving told me it was the famous American mocking-bird, rather rare in so high a latitude, but that a pair of them made their home in the elms of Cockloft Hall all the year round. From the house came the delicious odor of broiling bacon and steaming coffee.

"Breakfast in ten minutes, gentlemen!" said the Patroon, and with a whoop Ogden started for the house on a run, the whole troop after him, and I in my flying silk robe streaming far out behind me, since it was much too long for me, and my short night robe barely reaching to the scarlet tops of my Hessian riding boots, making a ridiculous figure, no doubt, but not the last one to dash into the house and up the stairs to the Green Moreen Chamber.

Nor, though I had more of a toilet to make than the others —who had only their hair to brush and tie and their collars and ruffles to arrange—was I the last to present myself in the pleasant dining-room, with its open windows looking out into the orchard and giving entrance to the sweet morning air. And, once seated at the generous table, there was no one who did more valiant trencher service, for I was beginning to feel the keen edge that change of air and climate is like to give to appetite.

That was a long day, and it proved to be a hot one, as Mr. Irving said these cool and dewy August mornings were likely to forerun, and we spent it in the big Chinese drawing-room with windows open on three sides, talking quietly of many things and dropping off between our talks into naps which we took lying on the luxurious Oriental divans. Our talk turned often on the duties that lay before us on the following day, and each man of the little company was full of instruction and advice to me as to how to perform my office of nurse, and how best to safeguard my health in the performance. Nor did Irving and Kemble cease to importune me to change my mind and to run no such hazard as they felt sure a stranger to their climate must needs run in exposing himself to the fever. I may have been foolhardy, I think now that I probably was, and that I might have saved my friends much anxiety and myself many hours of suffering by listening to their wiser counsels, but I believed then that I was on the path of duty and I would not yield to their importunities.

That evening after another game of leap-frog, followed by another bounteous supper, we sat in the kiosk by moonlight, each man talking quietly to the brother of his soul, as I learned was their custom on the eve of plunging into the perils of the fever, while we smoked and sipped our port. These talks were likely to drop into reminiscences, and sometimes messages were left for absent friends, for no man felt sure what the morrow would bring forth, since each day numbered its tens and hundreds of new victims, many of them friends and acquaintances. It reminded me of soldiers around the camp-fire on the eve of battle, talking solemnly to each other; knowing that they would never all sit together around the camp-fire again; that they would never look more into some of those familiar faces, and that there were voices sending messages to the loved ones at home that they were listening to for the last time — and no man knew but that fate was even then uttering to him its solemn edict — Thou art the man!

In one deep window sat Dick McCall and Harry Ogden, in another Peter Irving and Dick Porter, in still another the courtly Kemble and the gentle poet, John Paulding, and in the deep embrasure of another young Mr. Irving sat with his arm over my shoulder.

"And so you have no last messages for any fair ones?" he asked jestingly, for our talk had begun to grow more somber than either of us liked.

"None," I answered.

"What! So young and yet so cold of heart! I wager those gray eyes and those Hyacinthine locks have done cruel execution not once but often. Confess, Sir Knight of the Green Moreen."

"There is no one," I maintained stoutly.

"What about the little Rosie?"

"Tush!" I exclaimed impatiently. Somehow Rosie Dufour was always a sore subject with me, perhaps because I remembered my father's expressed wish.

"Well, then, Mademoiselle Desloge?"

I was silent. I did not like his speaking jestingly of any lady, I said to myself.

Young Irving understood and flushed.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Lionel," he said quickly, "if my jest seemed ill timed. But it was not so much jest as earnest. This is an hour when we Lads of Kilkenny are used to speaking out our hearts to each other. Rosie Dufour was a jest, but it seemed to me that for Mademoiselle Desloge, your comrade at sea for five weeks, and a very lovely lady indeed, you might well have some message of remembrance should the morrow not bring you health and safety."

He had divined the thought of my heart. I had wished much that I might dare send her some message in case the worst should befall. Therefore I thought a moment, and then I answered him soberly:

"If I should not come out of this venture in safety, I would be glad indeed if you would send a message of love and farewell to my father and my Aunt Pamela at Clover Combe Court. And say to Mademoiselle Desloge that, had the fates permitted, I would have liked much to have had one more talk with her, such as I twice had on the *Sea Gull*. Tell her that I hope for her a happy sojourn in America and a safe return to her friends. And that I pray her, on the strength of our brief friendship, to beware of the fever and on no account to come nearer the city than her present quarters."

"These are messages I will gladly deliver," said Mr. Irving with never a hint of a jest in his manner, "if the need should ever arise, which the gods forfend!"

The Patroon and Billy Taylor, arm in arm, crossed the room to us at this moment.

"Nine o'clock, gentlemen," said the Patroon. "And the rules are rigid, you know, on the night before our return to nursing."

Then he turned to me and explained courteously: "It is our rule, Sir Lionel, that every man shall be in bed by half-past nine and sit down to breakfast at five o'clock the next morning. At half-past five we start for the city."

Every man sprang to his feet at the word of the Patroon and half-past nine saw every man in bed. And if I did not fall asleep at once it was not because Mr. Irving kept me awake with his talk as on the night before. There was profound silence in our room, and all over the place. The only sounds that broke the stillness of the summer night were the lonely chirpings of a tree toad in the cherry tree by my window (I never heard a tree toad in England shrill like that one); and the distant bass of a bull-frog from the marsh by the lake (his hoarse cry had startled me well the night before; we have no such trumpeters among our English frogs); the strident and monotonous reiteration of that strange insect that Irving had told me said "Katy-did" and "Katy did n't" all night long; and the mournful call of a bird from the depths of a woody glen repeating rapidly over and over, "Whip-poor-Will," "Whip-poor-Will," according to Irving's interpretation. It seemed that the birds and the insects talked in this strange new world, but I could have wished they had talked in less mournful cadences, for the melancholy refrain "Whip-poor-Will," began to sound to my excited ears like "Yellow fever! Yellow fever! Tell his father! Tell his father!"

I am not usually either nervous or apprehensive. I believe I must even then have been nursing the seeds of that dread disease that five days later laid me low, and that it was due to them that I lay tossing on my pillow a large part of that August night and that it seemed to me I had only just fallen asleep when Irving roused me with a shout that it was time to be stirring.

Certainly the next few days have always been a dream-like haze in my memory, with but two or three points standing out with sufficient vividness to be recalled. One of those points was the loveliness of the August morning, cool, dew-drenched, filled with pungent odors of sea and shore, through which we rode, a rather sober band of young men, along a road winding from one little village to another, through green meadows and richly laden orchards, down to the ferry of Paulus Hook.

A second distinct memory is my first glimpse of Mr. Livingston as he lay in a darkened upper chamber, looking to me more like a livid, saffron-colored corpse than like any living being. The heavy wooden shutters at the windows were barred, but not so closely but that they admitted sufficient rays of the morning sun, to show the deathlike figure quite distinctly on its shrouded bed, and at the first glance, I had to turn hastily to the window for a breath of air to relieve the sudden sense of faintness that came near unmanning me at the sight. The house was a fine, large one, the first one on the Broadway, with nothing but a small green park between it and the beautiful bay, up which we had sailed, and nothing to hinder the entrance of the fresh breezes from the sea, so that I soon overcame my faintness, and Kemble and Irving, who were engaged in receiving reports and instructions from two other young men who were going off duty, did not even notice it, I think.

As I said before, I have only hazy memories of those two days — of nauseous duties that at first it was difficult for me to school myself to perform, but that grew easier with each repetition until I began to feel toward my patient something of the tenderness I think a mother must feel toward her helpless child. I remember that we were never all three of us in the sick chamber at a time after our first entrance there in the morning. There was a big room downstairs with a small room adjoining, in which, on a spirit lamp, a kettle with a concoction was kept continuously boiling, so that the room was filled with the fumes of vinegar and garlic and gunpowder smoke from grains of powder thrown at intervals on the flame. In this room we left the clothes we had worn from Liberty Hall and got into those we were to wear while nursing. In the larger room, which was a pleasantly furnished library, we took turns at resting through the day and night, for our labors were arduous while we were on duty, and either Kemble or Irving was being continually called out to see some new patient and make arrangements for his proper care. Indeed, Kemble seemed to be the head of this bureau of volunteer nurses, and he was so frequently called into consultation by friends of the sick or by physicians that I wondered how they had managed heretofore without my aid, poor and unskillful as it must needs be.

I have a dim remembrance, also, that in a pleasant dining-room across the hall we were comfortably cared for by an old colored cook whom the young men called "Mammy," who gave us delicious things to eat, if I could judge from the look and the savory odor of them, for the experiences of the sick-chamber had set my stomach against eating and I could barely force a few mouthfuls down with the aid of some fine burgundy Mr. Kemble had brought from Liberty Hall. It seems that when Mayor Livingston was taken ill and his friends went to his cellars for wine — which is much used in this sickness — they found the cellars empty, as the good man had despoiled them in caring for the sick of the city.

It is no wonder, then, that one of the points that stands out distinctly in my memory of those two days is that, late in the afternoon of the second day, this great man, for so I had come to regard him, whom I could see Irving and Kemble and good Dr. Mitchill had almost given up for dead, suddenly rallied from the collapse, which is the last and most fatal symptom of this dread disease, opened his eyes and smiled. I was alone with him. Both Kemble and Irving had been called imperatively to a case a few doors away, and, believing that it was only now a matter of an hour or two with Mr. Livingston, they had left him in my care with a promise that one or the other would be back every few minutes. They had also left instructions with me to keep up the soothing sponging with spirits of wine, and to continue at brief intervals to try to force a few drops of cognac or burgundy between the close-shut jaws.

Perhaps because I was such an inexperienced nurse my zeal was the greater. I improvised a sling by which I suspended immediately beneath my patient's nostrils a sponge saturated with aromatic vinegar, that he might be inhaling it without interrupting my sponging of him with the cooling spirits of wine. Every five minutes by the clock I renewed my efforts to force alternately cognac and burgundy between his lips, nor did I ever desist without being sure that a few drops at least had found lodgment there. It was after one of these attempts, more successful than the others, that he opened his eyes. He seemed dazed or startled at sight of a strange face and in a hardly audible whisper, his lips scarce moving, so that I guessed at the words rather than heard them, he whispered, "Who are you?"

"Your nurse," I answered quietly, for I did not think it wise to cause him even the small excitement the knowledge that I was his expected guest from England might occasion him. And inwardly trembling with excitement and my sense of responsibility, for he seemed to me like a man raised from the dead, I added, in as matter of fact a tone as I knew how to use, "My instructions are that you are to drink a half glass of this burgundy; allow me, sir." Whereupon I put my arm under his pillow and raised him so that he could drink more freely, and though he only drank a swallow or two, I thought I could detect a more natural color creeping into his face as I laid him down. He continued to look at me with that dazed expression for a minute; then he murmured just above his breath, "Ah, an Englishman!" closed his eyes and seemed to drop to sleep.

As for me, trembling with excitement, and determined he should not slip back again into that deathlike stupor, I redoubled my exertions. I renewed the aromatic vinegar, I put ice into the spirits with which I sponged him and at intervals of only three minutes now I put between his lips a few drops of the wine or the cognac, which he did not refuse to take. And by the time Irving and Kemble had returned his eyes were open again and wearing a much more lifelike expression than at first.

Their excitement was even greater than mine, though of course they showed no signs of it before their patient. They refused, now that there was a glimmering of hope, to leave him for any call, and all that night we three worked hard and when morning broke — I have learned that the gray dawn is a most blessed sight to a watcher by a sick-bed — when the morning broke and Dr. Mitchill came in on his early round, telling us afterward that he expected to find our patient gone, he found him in such a condition that he pronounced him out of danger, provided he continued to receive the most careful nursing.

At eight o'clock we were to be relieved by the two young men we had found in charge, but instead of looking forward to this as a relief, I found that my patient and my duties in the sick-room had taken such hold on me that I was unwilling to give them up. I begged to be allowed to remain. I had a terrible fear that these two young men would not be as careful or as faithful as Kemble and Irving had been, and I wanted to assure myself that nothing was left undone that could hasten or help the cure so well begun.

But I might as well talk to stone walls. Irving and Kemble and Dr. Mitchill were all three adamant. It was an iron rule, they said, which not even Kemble and Irving might break, though they would like much to stay through this day, at least, and watch Mr. Livingston's recovery. They had implicit confidence, however, in the two who were to take their places and they arranged that regular tidings should reach them of the sick man's progress.

Most of the next two days are still dreamlike in my memory. We went from Mr. Livingston's house out to Apthorpe Hall on the Bloomingdale Road, where it had been arranged we were to spend the two days of rest, and the first evening we dined at Richmond Hill with a large party of people. I have only a confused memory of that dinner, of much gay talk and laughter in which I was conscious of a struggle to play my part becomingly, and my remembrance of the next day is still more confused, but the evening that followed stands out clear cut, distinct, in memory's gallery.

We were invited to dinner at the Grange and half past three saw us on our way, galloping briskly along the beautiful high-road overlooking the majestic river. The day had turned off cool, so that we were not punishing our horses by our pace, and Kemble and Irving were keeping up a running comment on all they passed, so sparkling with gayety and wit as betrayed the exhilaration of their spirits. We had had good reports from Mr. Livingston and the relief and joy at the thought of his recovery were no doubt responsible for part of our excitement, but I had an idea that Kemble's was due partly to the thought of meeting Miss Livingston, and I wondered if the prospect of meeting Mademoiselle Desloge could have anything to do with Irving's. I knew well why my heart was pounding as heavily as my head, which all day had been throbbing with a dull pain — would she be there, or was she still at Liberty Hall?

She was there and the evening would have been one of unalloyed pleasure save for the fact that Mr. La Force was there also. I might not have minded that so much — though I found myself detesting the man more heartily with every glance from his black-rimmed eyes — but I might not have minded his mere presence if he had not chosen to devote himself most pointedly to Mademoiselle Desloge, and if she had not received his attentions as if she liked them, or so I thought. I think Mr. Irving did not like having the beauty engrossed by Mr. La Force, for he was constantly breaking into their conversation and by dint of his gay good humor and sparkling wit contrived to win a goodly share of her smiles for himself; but, between the two, I was left no chance at all.

Perhaps Miss Livingston divined my discomfiture; she strolled up beside me when, after dinner out under the trees, I happened to be left to myself for a moment, Mrs. Hamilton, with whom I had been talking, having been called off by Mr. Troup to settle a friendly dispute between him and Mr. Gouverneur Morris, for they also were of the party.

"Your friend Mr. La Force seems to be making an impression," she said.

"Why my 'friend'?"

"Have you not been rendering him a service? And is not that a proof of friendship?"

"The service was rendered Mr. Livingston, not Mr. La Force."

"I am afraid he is boring Mademoiselle Desloge."

"She does not look bored."

"Oh, she is too courteous to betray her ennui and — she is a Frenchwoman, and a very beautiful one; every man falls in love with her."

"He is a French*man*, and a very handsome one — or so I understand he is regarded."

"He is certainly handsome, but you know mere beauty does not carry so much weight with our sex as with yours."

"No? I had not so heard. You astonish me and you relieve me greatly."

My tone was purposely cynical, but it was true that I *was* relieved — a little.

"*We* are tremendously relieved to see you safe back from your two days' nursing. Miss Desloge and I have fumed and fretted over your obstinacy. Not but what we have also been immensely proud of you, and Mr. Kemble tells me you took to the nursing as if you were born to it, and you promise to prove one of their most valuable assistants. But I told Mr. Kemble not to permit you to go back again; and now I beg of you, Sir Lionel, do not be so foolhardy — think of your father!"

Her words were very pleasant to hear. I hoped and I believed that she would carry Mr. Kemble's good report of me to Mademoiselle Desloge, and if Mademoiselle had "fumed and fretted" she must care a little.

"Thank you, Miss Livingston," I said, "for caring whether I go near the fever or stay away. You are very kind to a stranger in a strange land. But why do you not use your influence with Mr. Kemble to keep him away also?"

"My influence with Mr. Kemble!" she scoffed; "I have none. And if he chooses to throw away his life, it is his own concern."

She turned away as she spoke, but not before I saw a bright flush suffuse her face, and I was sorry I had spoken as I did. The blush surprised me — I had not supposed she really cared. But she only took two or three steps, with her head well up in the air, when she turned and came back, speaking in a low tone, hurriedly, but with great earnestness:

"Sir Lionel, do not think that I do not greatly admire and honor all you young men for the course you are pursuing; I would not have Mr. Kemble or any friend of mine act differently, and I would gladly do as they are doing if it were possible, and if my family would let me. Only, we all feel a little sense of responsibility about you since you are a stranger here, and we feel that we owe it to your father to take care of you."

I had never seen Miss Livingston in so amiable a mood, and I had never liked her so well nor felt so little anxiety for Miss Desloge in her hands.

The evening had turned cool and Mrs. Hamilton came up at this moment and drove us all peremptorily into the house, where we found a cheery fire blazing in the wide chimney of the long living-room whose windows on one side looked to the west.

"You must see the sunset from indoors to-night," she said, "for these cool August evenings are dangerous in fever times."

I had felt a sudden chill out under the trees, and seeing no chance to look at the sunset with Miss Desloge, seated on a deep window seat, Mr. La Force on one side of her and Mr. Irving on the other, I drew up to the fire, grateful for its warmth, and Mr. Hamilton and Mr. Troup and Mr. Morris, gathering around the pleasant blaze, immediately began to ply me with questions as to Mr. Livingston's condition and my experiences since coming to America; thus making me a center of attention which it pleased my vanity Miss Desloge should be witness of. Nothing, I have discovered, is more flattering to a young man than the attentions of older men, and if they be also men of note, then is the flattery the more potent. Not even the attentions of young and beautiful women can so touch his vanity.

They were deeply interested in what I told them of Mr. Livingston, and no doubt I glowed in the telling, for I was naturally a hero-worshiper in those days, and Mr. Livingston was a real hero in my eyes. They laughed over my account of our exploits at Liberty Hall, Mr. Troup with such a genial guffaw that I saw out of the corner of my eye that Miss Desloge looked up quickly and, for a full minute seemed deeply interested in our group by the fire. Then, suddenly, Mr. Hamilton made a swift turn in the conversation.

"So the King has recalled Pitt to the helm?" he said. "Are you a Tory, Sir Lionel?"

"My family has been Tory always," I answered, "but I am a Foxite Whig. Only, I am first and foremost an admirer of Mr. Pitt."

"He is the greatest of living statesmen," said Mr. Hamilton fervently.

"With one exception, Alex," said Mr. Morris, laying his arm affectionately over Hamilton's shoulder. Morris was a good half head the taller.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Hamilton impatiently. "I am not in Mr. Pitt's class."

"I heard him call you by the same title you have applied to him, sir, 'the greatest of living statesmen,' only the week before I left home," I said respectfully.

"You know Pitt?" demanded Mr. Hamilton eagerly, ignoring the compliment, and Troup and Morris exclaimed in the same breath:

"He said *that* of *our* Hamilton!" and Morris added, "I have always held him in the highest admiration; your report of him has augmented it greatly."

"But tell us about him," demanded Hamilton, impatiently. He had flushed like a boy at the compliment of the great Pitt, but his modesty would not allow his friends to dwell on it. "Where have you known him?"

"He spent three days at Clover Combe with us and with my uncle just before I left home."

"With your uncle! Then all your talk must have been of war. I rather wonder that a young fellow like you could tear himself away from home at such a time. America must seem tame indeed by comparison."

I felt myself flush, though I was quite sure no imputation was intended.

"I would not have left home, sir, if I had been allowed to stay. My uncle thought me too young to enter the army for a year or two. He has promised me a company on my return and I am in the meanwhile to get myself in readiness for it by a life of adventure in America."

I did not mean to show that my pride was touched, but perhaps I did. I could see that Mademoiselle Desloge was listening to me and Mr. Hamilton hastened to deprecate any intention of criticising me.

"Your friends were exactly right, Sir Lionel," he said. "You are entirely too young. I am sorry you should have happened upon the scourge of yellow fever to begin your adventures, but certainly your friends would be proud of the way you have acquitted yourself in a trying ordeal. You are proving yourself of the metal to make a good soldier."

I was saved from the embarrassment of replying to this fine speech by Hamilton's eagerness to hear more of Mr. Pitt.

"But tell me, please," he went on quickly, "what is the condition of Mr. Pitt's health? We had heard, here in America, that he was far from well."

"And I believe you have heard correctly, sir," I answered, "if I can judge from his looks. He looks to me like a man far gone in a phthisic. But the state of his health does not in the least interfere with the fire and energy of his spirit. I heard my father say if they would only give him Fox in his cabinet he would pull through all right and pull the country through with him."

"But they surely will?" Mr. Hamilton demanded.

"My father thinks it doubtful, sir. The old King is bitterly opposed to all Whigs, but most of all to Charles Fox."

"Oh, the folly of kings! And of all governments, for that matter," groaned Mr. Hamilton. And then, as if the topic had suggested it, though I could not see the connection, he turned quickly to Mr. Morris:

"Do you think the Vice-president stands any chance for the nomination to the presidency?"

"None in the least," answered Mr. Morris curtly. "Do you think he is cherishing any hopes in that direction?"

"I am sure of it," replied Hamilton grimly. "But whom the gods would destroy, fortunately, they first make mad."

And then he turned away and the three older men entered into a close and confidential conversation which probably was not intended for me to hear and to which I did not listen, but I could not help overhearing an occasional word such as "Louisiana," "Western empire," "boundless ambition," "Blennerhassett," "General Wilkinson"; words which had little meaning for me then, but that I was able to interpret later by the light of events.

In the meantime Mrs. Hamilton had taken her seat at the tea-table, drawn up in the warm chimney nook. A black boy had just deposited upon the table a massive silver tray bearing a steaming urn of fragrant coffee and a collection of fragile porcelain cups. She called me to her assistance and I thought I saw my chance for a word with Miss Desloge. I dutifully handed a cup to Miss Livingston and one to Miss Angelica Hamilton — whom Miss Livingston kept close at her side with the air of using her as a protection against Mr. Kemble, who made a third in their little group — and then I bore one to the deep window-seat where Miss Desloge sat with her two admirers — for so they seemed to declare themselves. I had brought with me my own cup also, and I said to the two men as I came up:

"Mrs. Hamilton bids me invite you to her coffee-table, gentlemen."

Mr. Irving sprang up with alacrity at my word, and Mr. La Force more slowly, as if he had half a mind to forego his coffee rather than relinquish his seat by Miss Desloge. But Mr. Irving seized him by the arm.

"Come, La Force!" he said briskly. "We can't let an Englishman outdo us in waiting on the ladies," and dragged him off to Mrs. Hamilton and kept him there, for which I was devoutly thankful.

"Are you afraid of me?" I asked, as I slipped into Mr. La Force's seat.

The sun was setting under a heavy bank of slate blue clouds, betokening a stormy morrow, I thought, but at this moment it shot a sheaf of golden arrows in level lines straight from under the lower rim of the threatening bank. Not every beautiful woman could have borne that intense illumination, without suffering in her beauty, but its only effect on Miss Desloge was to turn the waving masses of her red-bronze hair to gold, to tint the rounded contour of her throat and cheek with the transparent rose and pearl of the shell, to make those wonderful brown eyes glow with such lambent flames that I could hardly have borne to look into them, save that as she looked up at me to answer my question there was a sweeter light in them than I had ever seen there before.

"To fear is to hate, and I do not hate you," she said with her twinkling glance. And then she added softly—"Not afraid *of* you but *for* you, Sir Lionel."

What wonder that my head whirled! She went on in a tone of entreaty that I liked well to hear though I had no intention of heeding:

"Do not go back, Sir Lionel. For your father's sake; for *all* our sakes."

"You make it hard for me, Miss Desloge," I stammered, "for I must go back."

"But you have proven your courage and your good will. Is not that enough? Mr. Irving says Mayor Livingston will owe his life to you, if he lives; that it is your untiring devotion and skill that have saved him. You have won your laurels; rest on them."

"It is not fame that calls, Miss Desloge, but duty," I objected.

"These others owe a duty to their friends and their countrymen, I grant, but not you," she urged. "Your duty is to your father and—to those who love you."

These last words were said in such a softly dropping voice

— could she possibly mean she was one who loved me? I was mad to think such thoughts, but the long lashes were lying on her cheek and her color was coming and going, a palpitating rose. I had to steel my heart against her.

"Those who love me, Miss Desloge," I said — the effort I made to resist her pleading made me speak sternly —"and my father most of all, would be ashamed of me and rightly despise me if I proved myself a coward."

There was a sudden flash of her eyes into mine. I could not be mistaken; that lightning glance spoke, louder than words, of generous admiration and approval. Could it be she had been only testing me in trying to persuade me to relinquish my duty? But in a moment the glowing look had vanished; the eyes were cold and hard.

"Very well, Sir Lionel, you will do as you think best, of course, regardless of the wishes of your friends."

"Mademoiselle, will you be good enough to get me my cashmere long shawl? My shoulders are cold."

I could not believe that the imperious command, carelessly and arrogantly uttered, could come from the Miss Livingston who had shown herself in such an amiable light earlier in the evening. My blood boiled at her tone and I saw Kemble regard her curiously. Mademoiselle Desloge had started up nervously at the first sound of Miss Livingston's voice, but I would not look at her.

"I will get your shawl, Miss Livingston. Pray tell me where it is," I demanded, striding up to her with, no doubt, something of the belligerence I was feeling betrayed in my voice and stride.

"Oh, la, no! Sir Lionel," she laughed. "'T would be vastly improper for you to invade the sanctity of a lady's chamber. Miss Desloge will get it."

In fact, Miss Desloge, moving swiftly, was already out of the room, leaving a most embarrassed group behind her. Mr. Kemble's face was deeply flushed; Mr. Irving was openly indignant; a light sneer curled Mr. La Force's lips, and I can only say, for myself, that, if I looked as I felt, no thundercloud could be blacker. The older men and Mrs. Hamilton had apparently neither heard nor seen, but Miss Angelica was drooping beside Miss Livingston like a white lily crushed with shame.

Perhaps with a courteous idea of relieving the embarrassment, Mr. La Force turned to me:

"I hope you are enjoying your nursing, Sir Lionel?"

"I like it better than a clerk's duties, I believe, Mr. La Force," I responded, not willing to be outdone by a Frenchman in his efforts to save the situation. "How are affairs at the office?"

Mr. La Force was visibly embarrassed and hesitating, a manner which I came to believe, later, was entirely assumed. He cleared his throat before he answered in a voice only slightly raised, but of so penetrating a quality that it caught the attention of the three older men, who stopped their discussion for a moment and turned to listen:

"Not quite as well as I could wish, Sir Lionel. I have come upon an inexplicable complication in the last day or two, but I have no doubt a further investigation will explain it satisfactorily."

These Yankees think us Englishmen slow of comprehension. Perhaps we are. I thought it very extraordinary that Mr. La Force should mention his office troubles in such a company, but it was not until many days afterward that it struck me that his speech could have any personal significance for me.

XV

ON THE GREAT TIDAL RIVER

I HAD not been mistaken when I thought that low-lying bank of cloud in the west portended storm, but I had not looked for it to come so soon. We were drenched to the skin before we reached the Apthorpe Mansion on the Bloomingdale Road, by one of those semi-tropical storms that I had already learned were peculiar to the country. It was as brief as it was violent and the stars were shining when we rode in under the Apthorpe trees, but the mischief was done, and if I had had any chance before of escaping the fever, I had none now.

Our friends of Apthorpe kindled great fires in the kitchen to dry our clothing while we went to bed, for we had come direct from Mr. Livingston's where we had no change of outer-garments, it being considered inadvisable to expose any more of our wearing apparel than necessary to the infection. Our coats were still a little damp when we got into them the next morning, which seemed to have no effect on Irving and Kemble, and ordinarily would have mattered not at all to me. But there was a cool wind blowing up the river and off the bay as we galloped through the morning air and by the time we had changed once more into our nursing garments in the little disinfecting room at Mr. Livingston's, every bone in my body was aching miserably, my head was throbbing violently, and my flesh was burning.

"'Tis only a cold I have taken," I said to myself, but hardly had we entered Mr. Livingston's chamber and expressed our congratulations to our patient — for he was a very different looking man from the one we had left two days before — when he turned to Mr. Kemble:

"That young Englishman has the fever, Kemble," he exclaimed peremptorily. "Put him to bed at once."

There was no use disclaiming or resisting. One horrified glance from Kemble and Irving and I was hustled into bed, by Mr. Livingston's direction, in a chamber across the hall from his own, and, having once submitted to their will, I sank so rapidly into apathy and stupor that I cared not what became of me.

For the next ten days I was unconscious most of the time, but it was an unconsciousness haunted by dreams. One constantly recurring vision I could have sworn at times was no dream, but a vivid reality. It was of an angel in white who bathed my face and hands with a cooling preparation; who held an aromatic sponge to my nostrils; who coaxed wine between my lips; who made cooling breezes play about my temples with a great fan she held in her hand; who was constantly rendering me the services I had rendered Mr. Livingston. And this angel in white wore a halo of red-gold hair and looked at me with the wine-brown eyes of Miss Desloge. I knew it was the delirium of fever, but I liked my hallucinations and clung to them.

It seems that, from the first, I developed the alarming symptoms that usually come later in the disease, and that my friends had little hope of my recovery; but they did not know the Marchmont constitution. It was the third day of September that I went to bed in Mr. Livingston's house, and on the fifteenth, I was being driven slowly up Broadway and out Cortlandt Street to a slip at its foot where lay the Livingston sloop, in which Miss Livingston had come down from Clermont three weeks before. Mr. Livingston was sitting beside me and, since a black frost had descended upon the city a week before, sent early as a special providence, all men thought, there would be no new cases and therefore no longer any pressing need for the services of my friends, Kemble and Irving, who were facing us in the coach. We were all four to make the trip together, as I knew; what I did not know and was puzzling my brain about quite unnecessarily, since I was sure to find out very soon, was whether Miss Livingston and Miss Desloge were also to be of the party. My luggage and my horse, Saladin, had been sent aboard the night before, and it was not yet seven o'clock when we stepped on the deck of the big sloop, *Clermont,* with the crew already tugging at the great mainsail, letting it out reef by reef, and bustling about the many other preparations pertaining to departure. It had been necessary to make this early start to take advantage of the tide, hoping that we might run as far as West Point on our first day's trip should we find favoring winds.

I was still weak with the great weakness that always follows this fever, and my head swam and my limbs trembled under me, as Miss Livingston and Miss Desloge came forward to meet us with smiles of welcome. Miss Desloge was all in white, for the morning was warm, and at my first glance into her eyes where anxiety and relief were almost equally portrayed, a conviction took possession of me not to be dislodged by any process of reasoning, that the angel in white who had appeared to me in my delirium had not been one of the wild visions of fever.

An awning had been stretched over a couch piled with pillows and robes on the forward deck, and here Miss Livingston and Miss Desloge insisted on installing me at once with the pretty imperiousness maidens know how to use toward an invalid, and that no man can resist. And since breakfast had been an early meal and a hurried one for all of us, a negro steward drew up a table near my couch and served us a second breakfast, as the great sail filled to the southerly breeze and we slowly floated out into mid-stream and the boat turned its nose up the river. The soft air and the enticing odors, wafted through the open door of the little galley, put a keen edge on an appetite that was growing rapidly from day to day, but the savory odors of the delicious-looking breakfast presently set forth on the little table were all of it I was permitted to indulge in. A bowl of mutton broth spiced with a dash of ratafia was my breakfast, and no amount of grumbling could persuade my stony-hearted guardians to grant me even so much else as a bit of broiled bacon.

Half an hour after breakfast I had my chance, when Kemble and Irving had gone to take a hand at the sailing — a sport in which they were past masters — and Miss Livingston had gone to look after her Uncle Edward, who insisted stoutly he was no longer an invalid, but whom she persisted as stoutly in coddling as one.

We were just passing the Grange. We could see its white-pillared porch high on the bluffs a half mile back from the river.

"Miss Desloge," I said sternly, "did you ever leave the Grange during your stay there and go down into the infected district of the city?"

She flushed quickly at the suddenness of my attack, but she answered coldly:

"'T is a strange question, Sir Lionel; why do you ask it?"

She was waving a great fan slowly to make more air, for the breeze, only a light one at best, was behind us, and the great sail kept most of it from reaching us, and the day was already beginning to grow sultry. She did not cease its slow waving back and forth as she spoke. I answered her:

"Because in my fever dreams I saw, not once but many times, just such a vision as I see beside me now, waving a great fan, like that one you hold in your hand."

"I have heard that people have many strange illusions in the delirium of fever," she answered calmly, but her color deepening steadily.

"I believe this one to have been no vision due to delirium, Miss Desloge, no 'baseless fabric' of a dream; but I cannot be sure whether that belief fills me more with joy or alarm. You had no right to expose yourself to infection."

"I have not admitted and I never will admit that I have so exposed myself, Sir Lionel," she protested with some impatience.

"You do not need to admit it," I persisted. "You have only to deny it — I will never doubt your word."

She sprang to her feet.

"I think I hear Miss Livingston calling me. I must go and see what she wants," she exclaimed hurriedly, looking about her as if seeking the means of flight.

But I caught the hand that held the fan; it clattered to the deck, and she struggled to release her hand that she might pick it up again.

"Never mind the fan, Miss Desloge," I commanded. "Sit down, please. Miss Livingston is not calling, and if she were it does not become you to be so humbly at any arrogant woman's beck and nod."

She sat down reluctantly, but in a flash she was looking up at me with a great show of mock humility and that twinkle in her eyes that haunted me with such an elusive sense of having known it before.

"I suppose it becomes me better, my Lord, to be at the beck and nod of an arrogant man?" she asked saucily.

"Much better," I smiled. "Though I deny the insinuation. I am not arrogant."

"Indeed? Would you call it meekness?"

"Neither am I meek. But I am a sick man and ought not to be crossed. Did you, or did you not visit me in my illness at Mr. Livingston's house?" I demanded.

She paled a little at my point-blank question, but I could see it was with anger. She swept quickly to her feet again before I could again prevent, and spoke haughtily:

"No, you are neither arrogant nor meek, Sir Lionel, you are only rude."

And giving me chance neither to explain nor to apologize, she vanished behind the great boom of the mainsail, leaving me to chew the cud of reflections that were somewhat bitter in the after-taste, but that discovered, also, a trace of sweetness in their tang.

She did not deny it! She *could* not deny it. Then she had risked her life to care for me; and I believed I owed my life to her care. It would be an easy matter to prove her presence in my sick chamber by simply asking Mr. Irving, Mr. Kemble or Mr. Livingston, or even Miss Livingston; she could not possibly have been there without the knowledge and connivance of all four. But a strong reluctance kept me from broaching the topic; I had rather they would think I did not suspect her presence, that I had been, through all those days, as wholly unconscious as I seemed.

Miss Desloge's flight, so far from daunting me, had given me a sense of triumph. If I could so easily put her to flight it meant she was afraid of me, and — what did that mean? And though I did not get another chance to speak to her for some hours, and though I could see her leaning over the railing with Mr. Irving, enjoying with him the beauty of the great river which now began to be wonderful, indeed, and which I longed to enjoy with a sympathetic soul such as I was sure she would prove, yet I bided my time, hoping I appeared sufficiently responsive to Miss Livingston's kind efforts at interesting and amusing me.

For, though Miss Desloge did not come near me, Miss Livingston sat beside me and spared no effort for my entertainment, and having my share, I suppose, of the conceit common to all young men, I began to wonder if it could be possible that Miss Livingston was trying to win my regards for herself, and if I could account, on that hypothesis, for her manner toward Miss Desloge — mortifying her and treating her as a menial in my presence, and at every opportunity sending her away and taking her place at my side.

I did not enjoy the thought, but perhaps I was not so much to blame for entertaining it, for Mr. Kemble, who had given many proofs of his interest in Miss Livingston, was constantly hovering near us, trying to attract a little of her attention for himself, and was as constantly being snubbed and sent about his business.

I suppose I grew restive finally, for Miss Livingston called sharply to Miss Desloge:

"Mademoiselle, come here, if you please, and rearrange Sir Lionel's pillows, and see if you can make him more comfortable."

Miss Desloge had started forward at Miss Livingston's first words, but at the last she stood stock still, the spirit of mutiny flashing from her dark eyes, and a wave of crimson deluging her face. Mr. Irving saw her embarrassment and sprang gallantly to the rescue.

"Let me do it, Miss Livingston," he exclaimed; "I know all about arranging pillows; I am an accomplished nurse, you know."

He was about to suit his action to his words, but I stopped him. I know not what perverse spirit had taken possession of me. By my own criterion of a gentleman's conduct I should have sympathized with Miss Desloge, been more than ready to save her any mortification and been hotly indignant with Miss Livingston for inflicting it upon her. I was experiencing, in place of these very proper emotions, a reprehensible sense of elation. I was keenly grateful to Miss Livingston for giving me this chance to domineer a little over Miss Desloge, as I fully intended to do. In fact, I was feeling quite like the little bully I used to sometimes be, in my childhood, toward Rosie Dufour. Not that I often got the better of Rosie; she knew how to hold her own, and as a rule returned me as good as I sent — if not better.

Now it struck me as rather odd that I should feel this way toward Miss Desloge; I never had the slightest feeling of the kind toward Peggy. Was it Miss Desloge's little spirit of resistance and of mutiny that kindled the desire in me to subdue it? Or was it the knowledge that she had put herself in my power by showing that she cared for me enough to risk her life in nursing me through an infectious fever? If it was the last, I must indeed be a bully at heart. But whatever had roused the feeling, I was enjoying it, and so I checked Mr. Irving's impulse.

"Don't you *dare* to touch one of my pillows, Jonathan!" I exclaimed peremptorily. "Miss Desloge, will you be so good as to carry out Miss Livingston's directions?"

She did not move, but glanced appealingly at Miss Livingston. It seemed to me those soft brown eyes could melt a heart of stone, with that look in them. They melted neither Miss Livingston's nor mine, however, though I had to look quickly away to preserve mine from becoming the softest kind of gruel.

"Miss Livingston," I said, "perhaps you will be so kind as to repeat your instructions. I think Miss Desloge did not quite understand them."

Whereupon Miss Livingston repeated them with such extreme imperiousness that I winced a little, though I was determined to go through with my part. Miss Desloge had no choice but to obey. She moved slowly forward, but by the time she had reached my couch she seemed to have decided upon the manner in which she would obey, since obey she must. She tossed her head disdainfully, seized the pillows with no tender hand, almost with the effect of jerking them from under my head; gave them each one a vindictive little punch and as roughly as was possible to her to do anything, rearranged them under my head and shoulders.

I caught Mr. Irving's eye. He had inclined to be much offended with me, I think, for what he regarded as my discourtesy to Miss Desloge, but as I caught his eye I gave him a knowing wink and smile. He saw that it was all a play and his brow cleared.

"There! Sir Lionel, I hope you are more comfortable!" snapped Miss Desloge, as she gave my pillows one last fierce punch.

I sighed ecstatically.

"Oh, delicious!" I murmured; "I never had pillows so skillfully and so tenderly arranged before. Perhaps, since you have been so good, you will be still better and sit beside me and fan me while Mr. Irving tells us about these wonderful shores we are passing."

She could not keep the corners of her beautiful scarlet lips from dimpling into a little smile, nor prevent that delightful twinkle, that I was beginning to watch for like the face of an old friend, from peeping roguishly out of her eyes. She took her seat beside me demurely and picked up the great fan from the foot of the couch, while Mr. Irving drew up a stool to my other side.

"Oh, la, Mr. Kemble, let us go for a stroll," said Miss Livingston, rising as she spoke. "Mr. Irving is daft on the Hudson. He is stuffed with legends of Sleepy Hollow and the Dunderberg. He says he is going to write a book about them some day, but we have heard him tell them so often I had rather not hear them again until I read them in his book."

I thought she was probably a little miffed at my evident determination to keep Miss Desloge beside me, but I blush now when I think of the conceit of me. I have no doubt she was as delighted to get off alone with Mr. Kemble as he was to have her to himself for a while, though she did not betray her delight as undisguisedly as he.

Miss Livingston had pointed out Fort Washington and across the river from it Fort Lee, just at the beginning of a great wall of rock rising several hundred feet above us, sheer and straight as the side of a house. We had been for an hour or more sailing by the mighty wall and still there seemed no end to it. It filled me with awe to look up at it.

"The Titans have been at work here, Mr. Irving," I said, as he drew up his stool beside me.

Mr. Irving fell into my mood at once, and with all the pride of a showman descanted on the wonders of the "Great Chip Rock," as he called it. We were running close in under it now and since the day was wearing on to noon and the heat had waxed with the hours, we found the shadow of the great rock a pleasant relief from the hot glare of the waters. Irving had just pointed out to me a projecting point on the great wall where a pair of lovers had suddenly and mysteriously disappeared from the eyes of their friends not thirty feet away, never to be seen or heard of again, when the black steward bustled up with preparations for another meal, and Miss Livingston, her uncle and Mr. Kemble hearing or seeing or smelling the delightful news — for in a long day on the water nothing can be a pleasanter means of beguilement than frequent little meals — Mr. Irving's stories were put an end to for a while.

And this time, much to my delight, I was allowed something more substantial than a bowl of broth. A grilled bone, and a bit of hot buttered toast with a glass of burgundy made a more substantial meal than I had yet been permitted, and when, as a dessert, I was given a slice of a melon of such rich and luscious flavor as I had never before tasted, I felt that I was far on the high road to complete recovery, though, since Miss Livingston ordered Miss Desloge to carve my bone into extremely small mouthfuls, and to feed them to me, I began to think I did not want to get well too quickly — I would miss the pleasant services of my nurse. To be sure, Miss Desloge still maintained her air of acting under compulsion, as she malignantly speared each piece of mutton with her fork and fiercely presented it to my lips, but she was withal so dainty and so dexterous in the doing of it, and I was so sure her fierceness was only assumed, that I enjoyed it better than if it had been done with an air of tenderness, since there were others there to see.

And while we were still at the table, we left the great wall of rock behind us and came out into a wide lake with high hills on the left bank and on the right, picturesque valleys and hanging woods, and sparkling streams and sloping meadows, and orchards laden with ruddy apples, and hamlets and villages, and farmhouses with great barns bursting with hay, and sleek cattle and fat horses in the pastures. It was a homely picture of rural comfort and boundless prosperity, and I thought it as fair a landscape and a richer setting than any I had ever seen in Old England. When I said so to Mr. Irving his eye kindled:

"'T is the landscape I love best of all!" he exclaimed enthusiastically. "I have spent much of my boyhood hunting those woods and fishing those streams and some day, please God, I shall have a home in one of those valleys with its lawn sloping down to the river I love."

Then he told me the little village we were just passing was called Tarrytown, and the Dutch housewives had named it so because their husbands tarried late on Saturday nights in Van Tassel's tavern over their pipes and ale. There, in a little cleft between two hills, where we caught a glimpse of a square church tower, he pointed out Sleepy Hollow, the oldest settlement in that part of the country; and he had some blood-curdling tales to tell us of a headless horseman who haunted the Hollow and the little churchyard — or at least they would have been blood-curdling but that everything young Irving said was so seasoned with a lively wit that we laughed where we should have shuddered.

He pointed out the spot, also, where the gallant young André was captured, and it pleased me much that he used neither the levity with which he had told the tale of the Headless Horseman, nor the veiled pride that might have been expected in speaking of a foeman. I was grateful, since at home we younger men had made a hero of the unfortunate André and I could ill have borne to hear him lightly spoken of. Instead, Mr. Irving said that there had been much sympathy for André's fate in America, and he believed, if it had been possible, Washington would have pardoned him; while for Arnold, the traitor, there was only horror and detestation throughout the land.

It was years after that I read the tale of the Headless Horseman in print, and while with the rest of my countrymen I admired the great writer extravagantly, and eagerly devoured all he wrote as soon as it appeared in print, I think this story will always remain a special favorite with me; for I came to know the Headless Horseman's country well before I left America, and Mr. Irving himself told me that he believed it was our recalling together the old tales and the old times, when he was visiting me at Clover Combe Court, that was the occasion of his writing the tale. For it was immediately on his return to London from that visit, walking across London Bridge one night, that it occurred to him to put the Headless Horseman into the love affairs of Katrina Van Tassel, Marcus Van Brunt and Ichabod Crane, and so weave a tale of Sleepy

Hollow. And no sooner had the idea taken possession of him than he hurried home and began to write, and in thirty-six hours he had finished one of the most charming tales he ever wrote or I ever read.

I was proud enough of my acquaintance with Mr. Irving in those later years, for in my youth I had had some hankerings after a literary life myself, and had tried my hand at sonnets and a tale or two. But I had given them up long before Mr. Irving's tale saw the light for the stirring incidents of a soldier's career, and later for the quiet life of a country squire at Clover Combe Court, but I still felt occasional longings in that direction, and if I had concluded that the gift of the gods was not mine, it still pleased me greatly to number among my friends a man who could stir, with his gentle art, to laughter or to tears, as he willed.

The tide and the breeze, what there was of it, had been with us through the morning, but the tide had turned a little after midday so that it was late afternoon by the time we had sailed through the Tappan Zee and through a second and a broader lake, and were entering the portals of the Highlands. It had been a long day and I was growing restless, and determined on trying my strength, which had been steadily gaining through the day. Miss Desloge had long since left her post of fanning, and Irving had soon followed her, but I could hear voices behind the big sail, and the cool breeze that had sprung up as we entered the shadow of the great hills put energy into my veins and enticed me to my feet, to find the voices.

If I had been a ghost I could hardly have made more of a sensation as I turned the end of the boom and came suddenly upon them grouped on the wide after deck, gazing up at the mighty Dunderberg behind us, for this new breeze was head on and we were now tacking across and up the river straight for another great mountain that Irving called St. Anthony's Nose.

Irving and Kemble sprang forward to offer me assistance and Miss Livingston began to flutter around me aimlessly, as if afraid I might fall in pieces if she touched or spoke to me, and only Mr. Livingston and Miss Desloge sat still.

I was annoyed at so much fuss.

"Tush!" I exclaimed, rejecting impatiently Kemble's and Irving's outstretched hands. "You see I am perfectly well able to take care of myself. I am not quite a Samson, but if Miss Desloge will allow me a seat beside her on the bulwarks I will convince you that I am no longer much of an invalid."

My limbs were trembling under me, and I think Miss Desloge discovered that I was not as strong as I pretended, and therefore reconsidered her first impulse to receive my request disdainfully. She made room for me beside her, looking up at me with a smile that brought the color back to my face with a rush — I could feel it.

"We have been wishing for you, Sir Lionel," she said gently. "We did not like to have you miss these grand mountains. You have seen the Rhine, have you not? Is it as beautiful as this?"

"Not half so majestic, not nearly so impressive," I answered, looking back at the dark fir-clad sides of the Dunderberg and forward to the bold outline of St. Anthony's Nose, toward which our bellying sails were sweeping us rapidly. "But have you never seen the Rhine?" I added curiously, for she seemed to me like a young woman who had seen everything and done everything that was supposed to be the proper thing for a young woman to do. "How does it happen you have never made the grand tour? I supposed every properly brought up young lady had made it."

"I have not been properly brought up, I suppose," she said with an air of embarrassment that made me instantly regret my ill-timed pleasantry. I ought to have known better than to make such a speech to a poor young woman, dependent on her own exertions for a livelihood. But it was difficult for me to think of Mademoiselle Desloge as anything less than a duchess in disguise, she was such a regal creature in face and form — yes, and in manner, too, when she chose to be. I started to apologize, but she gave me no chance.

"It was the fault of the time, Sir Lionel," she said gravely. "Maidens learned to do without many things, without accomplishments and even comforts in those troubled years through which I was growing up and receiving an education. Many of us would have been thankful, indeed, if we could have kept our friends and our homes."

Her voice betrayed more feeling in those last words than she liked, for she added quickly, with a defiant little ring in her tones, "Please don't think, Sir Lionel, that Miss Livingston's French companion is making a bid for your sympathy."

Miss Livingston had begun to sing a quaint little song to a catchy air. I can remember none of the words but the chorus, in which the three gentlemen joined, and from a little distance, the skipper and his two sailors, and from the gallery door, Gumbo, the black steward, all swelled the chorus. It was a rollicking song, and the voices and the harmony were good, but I liked it best, because, for the moment, it shut Miss Desloge and me off to ourselves.

"Forgive me, Mademoiselle," I said quickly; "it was a rude question. But will you think me rude if I ask you to tell me something about those times. Were you in them? Did you suffer?"

No doubt she read the genuine sympathy in my voice, for she answered me simply and frankly:

"I do not like to talk or even think of them, Sir Lionel. I was a very little girl in '93 and my friends did their best to keep the horror of it away from me, but they could not keep it all. I went to sleep at night in terror and woke in the morning in fear and trembling. One morning I woke up to find that those who were nearest to me had been seized and carried away in the night and — they never returned. Then I was placed in the convent of Les Sœurs Angelique, and there I stayed until a few months before I came to earn my living in America. So you see," she added, with a struggle to recover her lightness of manner, "there was no chance for me to make the 'grand tour.'"

"Les Sœurs Angelique!" I repeated. "Did you ever know a little girl there named Rosie Dufour? It seems to me that was the convent where she was educated."

"Rosamond Dufour? Was she a freckled-faced, red-headed little girl, awkward, and with long legs and arms?"

"Certainly she was not beautiful as I remember her, but I was only a boy and I do not think she impressed me as so ugly as you describe her. I was very fond of her when we were children."

"Oh, I ought not to call her ugly," Mademoiselle exclaimed quickly. "She was a friend of yours and she was one of my very best friends all the years I was in the convent. But certainly no one could call her beautiful when she first came, and she had a fiery little temper that matched her hair."

"How did you learn to like such an unattractive little creature as you paint her?"

"Oh, I was so sorry for her. Her friends, too, had perished in the Terror and she was so homesick for England, for she had only been in France a few months. She slept in the crib next mine in the children's dormitory, and she used to cry at night, but so quietly no one heard her but me. Oh, and there was a little boy she used to talk of and wanted to see — could that have been you?"

"Did she never call my name?"

"I think she did, but that was so long ago. She did not talk of you, as she grew older. Ah, I know now, it *was* you, for she called you Lion."

"Poor little Rosie!" I murmured, and could have wept at the thought of the lonely child. "When did you see her last?"

"Not so long ago. She was in the convent as long as I was there."

"Poor Rosie!" I said again, "it must have been hard to be so ugly and have for her best friend such a b —"

I was thinking aloud and I brought myself up short. Mademoiselle understood as I knew from the bright blush that leaped into her face, and her hurried way of speaking.

"Oh, but you must not think she grew up so ugly. I am sure people thought her quite as good-looking as her friend."

"Impossible!" I murmured, but Miss Desloge refused to take any notice of my killing glance, and just then Miss Livingston called to us:

"Come! Mademoiselle and Sir Lionel. You must join in the chorus. You have talked long enough."

And stumbling over the outlandish names as best we could, I in my deep counter and Mademoiselle in her rich contralto, we did our best:

"West Point and Middletown,
Konnosook and Doodletown,
Kakiak and Marmapaw,
Stony Point and Haverstraw."

"No good mariner on the Hudson ever passes the Dunderberg without singing that chorus," said Miss Livingston. "Doodletown is just behind the mountain and the other towns are not far off. Is n't it a delightful song, Sir Lionel?"

"Very—" I began, but it was Mr. Livingston who interrupted:

"Mademoiselle," he said gayly, "I told you to beware; there was danger among so many *sparks,* but I did not mean by that you must not wear Mr. La Force's flowers. What have you done with them?"

"I gave them to Gumbo to put in water for me," answered Mademoiselle carelessly, but with a steadily deepening color that I did not like.

XVI

A LETTER FOR THE EARLY MAIL

PERHAPS it was because of my weak condition that trifles made undue impression upon me, either irritating or worrying me as their nature might be. It was extremely irritating to me that Mr. La Force should have been sending flowers to Mademoiselle; evidently their acquaintance had progressed rapidly during my illness. And it was still more irritating that Mademoiselle should have colored in that conscious fashion at the mention of the flowers. But for that tell-tale blush I might have fancied it a matter of small moment in which Mademoiselle was as little interested as her words were intended to indicate.

But there was another matter that troubled me even more than Mr. La Force's flowers — this was a subtle change, real or fancied, in Mr. Livingston's manner toward me.

In all his intercourse with the young people on the boat, he was full of a genial gayety as natural to him, apparently, as the air he breathed. Toward me alone there was a reserve and gravity of demeanor that amounted almost to constraint.

This would not have seemed so noticeable, I might have thought it due to the fact that I was more of a stranger than the others, but that, until the last twenty-four hours, he had been most genially cordial to me. Indeed, it was more than cordiality, for he professed unbounded gratitude for what he was pleased to term my saving of his life. And though he made his protestations in that gay, half-jesting manner natural to him, he repeated them so frequently and made them the excuse for all kinds of delicate attentions and services he was so continually rendering me that I could not doubt his sincerity. But now all that was changed. He had spent several hours of the day before at his office for the first time since his illness, and returned late in the afternoon, extremely exhausted with the effort. So much so, in fact, that he retired at once to his room, requesting not to be disturbed at supper time. I had not seen him again until we were ready to start for the sloop in the morning, but it had seemed to me, from the moment of his first greeting, that there was a change in his manner toward me. I could not doubt it as the day wore on, and he alone, of the little party, did not come near my couch to enliven an invalid's enforced seclusion; and almost the first words he had addressed to me through the long day were uttered a few moments after his pleasant little speech to Miss Desloge.

"I think, Sir Lionel, that you have tried your strength as long as it is well. I would advise your lying down again," he said.

The words themselves were kind enough, but the manner of their utterance was so formal that I was abashed. I was feeling stronger with every minute that I sat on the bulwarks beside Miss Desloge, the cool evening breeze, which had sprung up with the lengthening shadows, bringing strength and healing on its wings, but I did not dare object to his suggestion, and I rose to my feet slowly. Mr. Irving, looking a little perplexed, sprang to my assistance.

"Let me give you an arm, Green," he said, and as we walked away together, he whispered in my ear, "what have you done to the mayor? He has been looking like a thundercloud all day."

"I wish to Heaven I knew," I answered hotly. "Have you no suspicion, Jonathan?"

"Not in the least, but I rather think Miss Desloge has."

"Miss Desloge!" I exclaimed.

"Yes; didn't you look at the two ladies when Mr. Livingston spoke to you? Miss Livingston colored and looked down, the picture of embarrassment for her uncle's lack of cordiality; Miss Desloge looked straight at you, and if ever I saw comprehension, sympathy, and a desire to animate with courage in a woman's eyes they were all in the glance she bestowed on you."

I had seen it too and thrilled under it while I did not understand it. I was hardly surprised, therefore, that she followed us almost immediately, and I could hear her calling to the others:

"Come, Miss Livingston and Mr. Kemble, let us share Sir Lionel's exile. I think he needs cheering up a bit." There was a little defiant ring in her voice as she said it that I have no doubt was intended for Mr. Livingston's ears.

The others did not come, and after a while Irving sauntered off and left us alone together, while the mighty panorama of the hills slowly circled about us as we tacked and retacked, sometimes shutting us into a land-locked bay with no apparent egress and then suddenly disclosing a narrow outlet between the bases of lofty mountains, cool and shadowy, as the evening dews began to fall.

There is no perceptible current in this great river, and so wide was it in places, that with the bold outline of the hills, clad in rich forests towering above it, it was more like a chain of beautiful lakes — a succession of Loch Katrines — than like any mere river I have ever seen. And yet, surpassingly beautiful as it was it could not entirely enchain my eyes; for beside me sat Miss Desloge, her brown eyes lighting with wonder, her face glowing with the beauty reflected from river and shore, the soft air setting little red gold tendrils of hair curling about neck and brow, and what man could have spared all his glances for mere scenery, however entrancing! Once when she caught me looking at her her eyes fell and a quick flush mounted under the warm white skin.

"Miss Desloge," I said, to relieve her embarrassment and my own, "can you recall that jingle we were singing and will you write it down for me? It was such utter nonsense I would like to keep it."

I felt in my pocket for tablet and pencil, and she took them and wrote it out, but with her face still flushed and visibly embarrassed, so that I wondered a little. As I folded the bit of paper away in my pocket she looked up with the air of one taking a difficult resolution.

"Sir Lionel," she said, hesitatingly, "Mr. Irving tells me that Mr. Livingston spent yesterday afternoon in his office."

"Yes," I said, "he did," for she seemed to be waiting for me to say something.

"Do you think"— still more hesitatingly —"that would account for his manner to-day?"

"His manner has not been peculiar, has it, except toward me, perhaps?" I asked.

"No, only to you."

"I can hardly see how a visit to his office should affect his feeling for me."

"Do you — quite trust — Mr. La Force?"

"Mr. La Force! I do not like him, but I know of no reason for distrusting him. Do you?"

"Oh, no!" she answered quickly, "no *reason*. Only an intuition."

"But I thought you were great friends! He sends you flowers."

"Which I throw into the river!"

I smiled.

"That is what you meant by giving them to Gumbo to put in water?"

She looked up at me with the familiar twinkle.

"I told the absolute truth. I gave them to Gumbo and told him to throw them into the river."

That little talk sent my spirits up many degrees and as the sun sank behind the western hills and the pale orb of an almost full moon hung suspended over the brow of lofty Mount Taurus in the east, and the supper table was drawn up by my couch once more and the little party of six gathered around it for the evening meal, not even Mr. Irving was in a gayer mood than I. Gumbo served smoking dishes with tantalizing odors, and for the sick man an omelette light and golden, a slice of hot toast deliciously browned, and a cup of fragrant tea. Mr. Irving told tales of the Highlands, and the sloop skimmed lightly over the water, every sail set and bending and bowing to the evening breeze, and by the time the sun had gone quite down behind Old Cro's Nest and the moon was well up over the shoulder of Taurus, casting bright lights and deep shadows, we were drawing up to the landing at West Point.

My elation did not leave me on the slow drive up the winding and picturesque road to the barracks and the commandant's house on a broad plateau several hundred feet above the river. The commandant himself, a most courteous gentleman, and Mayor Livingston were in the carriage with me, so I was being treated as a guest of honor; and though I would have liked better to be beside Miss Desloge in that other carriage behind, from which the sound of merry voices and occasional peals of laughter rendered it difficult for me at times to make suitable responses to the commandant's kind inquiries for my welfare, yet I was still too elated by the thought of Mr. La Force's flowers flung into the river to be entirely unhappy under my compulsory honors.

On the broad plateau at the top of the drive, the cadets, a little company of fifty or sixty, and a fine soldierly-looking lot of young fellows, were drawn up in company order in the moonlight to give the mayor a salute of honor. It occurred to me then, as it has occurred to me often since, that the moonlight is brighter in this country than in ours, for on the open parade grounds the cadets stood out more distinctly in the brilliant moonlight than they might have done on many a foggy November day in England.

Mayor Livingston had to make them a speech, and in the light of what I learned later, of the heavy care that sat brooding at his heart that day, I have often wondered at the rollicking good humor, the brilliant wit, and the patriotic fire he put into his brief sentences. He was a great man, and in spite of my feeling that in some way — how, I could not guess — I had come under the ban of his displeasure, I glowed with enthusiasm at his words, and all the ardor of my hero-worship, which had been chilled a little in that long day on the river, revived with full force.

The cadets received his speech with vigorous cheers, in which the occupants of the two carriages joined as vigorously; the ladies adding the eager clapping of their little hands to swell the chorus of the men. In the hall of the commandant's house, we found a late tea awaiting us, which I, for one, was glad to see. I have heard that not all the American houses have our English meal of a late supper and that an Englishman is often in danger of going to bed hungry in a land flowing with milk and honey. I was weary enough to have gone straight to my bed, but a bit of chicken, a biscuit and a glass of very good wine made me forget my fatigue and I was glad of a chance for another word with Mademoiselle before we separated for the night.

I found my chance and began straightway:

"Mademoiselle, there is something I want to say to you, something I was about to ask you when Gumbo interrupted us with supper on the boat."

"Was it about Mr. La Force?" she asked quickly.

"Yes."

"Please don't ask me. I have been regretting that I spoke as I did. I had no right to arouse your suspicions. It was neither discreet nor friendly of me."

"I thought it very friendly, to me."

"But not to Mr. La Force."

"Oh! You regard him as a friend?"

She colored with vexation.

"I have no right to *treat* him otherwise, no matter how I may regard him, since he has always shown himself friendly to me," she answered frigidly.

"Certainly not," I replied as coldly, and the commandant's wife, a very gracious lady, coming up to me with a bed candle in her hand and giving me many motherly precautions as to the night air, I said good night to her and to Miss Desloge and went upstairs, with Irving, in a very different frame of mind from the joyful one in which I had entered that house.

As we started for the staircase, curving up from one end of the wide hall, the commandant called after us.

"Young gentlemen," he said, "if you would like to send any letters back to the city, I have an orderly starting for New

York early in the morning. As he will probably set out before you are up, anything you want to go you must lay on the hall table to-night. You will find writing materials in your rooms."

We thanked him, but I, for one, had no letters to send back, and only longed to be in bed and forget in sleep Miss Desloge and Mr. La Force, yes, and every American I had met, I was ready to add in my present irritable and unreasoning frame of mind.

But sleep was long in coming and when it came it brought with it fretful and troubled dreams that were more harassing than my waking thoughts. I had opened my eyes many times through the night only to find the moonlight still flooding the room. When I opened them at last and saw through a window looking toward the east that Mount Taurus was standing out grim and black against the background of the gray dawn, I was glad the long night was over, and slipping quietly from my bed and into my clothes, so as not to disturb Irving, I stole down stairs and out into the dew-drenched morning.

No spirit of unrest could withstand the beauty and the glory of that wonderful dawn. All night I had been questioning myself: Was I falling in love with Miss Desloge? Had I any right to do so? And if I had was she not a born coquette, playing with me, while really interested in Mr. La Force?

But however I might answer the first two questions, the peace of the morning answered the last for me. With all the high canopy of heaven catching the rose tints from the flaming nimbus about Mount Taurus' hoary crest and reflecting them in the still waters below that lay motionless and dark as a mountain tarn, guarded by Taurus and Breakneck mountain on the east and on the west by Old Cro's Nest and Storm King; in the heart of all this more than earthly splendor, the very air about me palpitating and glowing with beauty, it was impossible to doubt Miss Desloge. I turned toward the house as the glow began to fade from mountain peak and mountain tarn, happy in the blessedness of being alive on such a morning, with youth and love to make life bright with promise.

In coming through the hall, a half hour before, it had been too dark to see objects distinctly, but I had noted that on the table but one letter lay awaiting the orderly's early morning start. Only one of the commandant's guests, evidently, had availed himself of the opportunity for sending mail to New York. On my return to the house the outer door stood open and the first rays of the rising sun were penetrating every nook and corner of the wide hall. The letter still lay on the table, but the orderly was following close behind me and took it up from under my eyes as I passed. But not before my glance had involuntarily fallen upon the superscription and recognized it.

It was addressed to "MR. GASTON LA FORCE, FEDERAL HALL, NEW YORK CITY," and no man had penned that superscription. Moreover, I had seen that writing but once before, yet well I knew that all its flowing characters were identical with the lines on the folded bit of paper lying near my heart, the idle rhyme:

"West Point and Middletown,
Konnosook and Doodletown,
Kakiak and Marmapaw,
Stony Point and Haverstraw."

XVII

HOPE RIDES WITH ME TO MONTGOMERY PLACE

I HAD been nearly a week in Clermont, and in all that time I had not once lapsed from the air of dignified courtesy toward Mademoiselle Desloge that I had prescribed for myself as I climbed the stairs to my room that early morning in West Point. I had said to myself then — she is a born coquette, French to her heart's core; there can be no sympathy between her and an Anglo-Saxon reared to esteem sincerity the highest of all virtues.

Moreover I had said to myself — Why should I be caught the second time in the lure of any woman? Have I not had my lesson? I am here for adventure, not for love, and as long as I remain on American soil, I will not think twice of any maiden. Let her have her Frenchman — they are of kindred blood. As for me, when I fall in love, it shall be with some true-hearted English girl, or not at all.

They were brave words, bravely spoken — or bravely thought — but they were hard to live up to. Hard when, as often happened, Mademoiselle was the center of attraction to some little circle of admirers, hanging on her lips for her gay smiles and witty words; harder still, when, as sometimes happened, I was left alone with her and all her gay spirits fell away from her and she was gently solicitous for my health, or spirits, with a soft little air of deprecating my displeasure (which she seemed to recognize), that was very hard indeed to resist; hardest of all, when, as happened more than once, Miss Livingston was imperious or capricious with her; and to be the witness of the painful flush of wounded pride and self-esteem, or worse, the quivering lip of hurt sensibilities, was almost more than mortal man could withstand. And yet I hardened my heart and treated her coldly, for had I not seen with my own eyes her letter to La Force, and known that she must have sat up until the midnight hour to write it?

The Livingstons owned several great places in the neighborhood of Clermont and by this time I had recovered my strength sufficiently for riding (for the fine air was in itself the best of tonics), and it was proposed that we should visit the family places in turn, beginning with Montgomery Place, belonging to Mr. Livingston's sister, a few miles farther down the river. I had brought Saladin with me and I had also brought from the City Tavern a mulatto boy who had taken a great fancy to Saladin — which the horse seemed to return — and who had taken entire charge of him during my illness. I was finding him useful also as valet for he was as nimble-fingered in brushing and polishing and in tying ribbons and lacers as he was firm-handed with bit and bridle, and this in my semi-invalid condition I found no small convenience.

The ride to Montgomery Place was rather long for an invalid, Mr. Livingston said, for as an invalid he persisted in regarding me, and we were to make the start immediately after breakfast that we might take it in a leisurely fashion with intervals for rest. I was as eager for the expedition as any boy, for it was to be my first ride in weeks, and my strength and spirits had waxed rapidly in the last few days. Our way lay through an enchanting country, along the old Post Road from Albany, with the noble river on our right; over hills and valleys, across winding streams and by picturesque falls, and through forests already beginning to show glimpses of that wonderful color, scarlet and gold, that was soon to make them a blaze of beauty almost inconceivable to my Englishman's experience. More than all, the air was like wine, with just a hint of frost in it and of an intoxicating quality new to my senses, and that I have no doubt was largely responsible for the exhilaration of my spirits as the little cavalcade cantered gayly down the long avenue of maples and through the park-like grounds of Clermont.

Certainly Miss Desloge had nothing to do with my sense of elation. I was not riding by her side, and Mr. Livingston was. And since Mr. Livingston was still a young and attractive man and a widower, and evidently much charmed with the beautiful Frenchwoman — who in her turn seemed not ill pleased with his attentions — I ought to have been suffering the pangs of jealousy, I suppose, and no doubt would have been but for the stern resolution I had taken at West Point. As it was, Irving and I were racing ahead of the little party and then dashing back upon them, making a great display of our horsemanship and a greater display of hilarity which was not entirely forced on my part (it was not at all forced on Irving's, he was always jovial), but it was not entirely forced on my part, since the sight of Miss Desloge, in her flowing habit of hunter's green, a dark green plume mingling with the waving mane of her hair, burnished like copper, and riding a spirited horse with perfect ease and skill; the sight of all this loveliness, and none of it for me, acted on my spirits much as a goad acts on a mettled steed — it rendered them for the time being, wild and uncontrollable.

Even Irving began to wonder at me at last.

"What ails you this morning, Green?" he asked finally. "You are acting more like one of our wild Hurons than like a sedate young English baronet."

The answer I made was to dare him to a leap across a little stream on whose banks we had drawn rein. The road wound down through a ford but where we stood the banks were high and steep and rocky and a good twenty feet across.

"Are you mad, Green?" was all his answer; and the others coming up at that moment, he turned to Miss Desloge.

"What have you done to Sir Lionel, Miss Desloge, that he should be wishing to commit suicide?" he asked. "He is daring me to leap across White Clay Kill, and kill it would be for himself and Saladin, too, if he attempted it."

"Oh, I don't know," said Miss Desloge coolly; "it 's hard to kill some people, you know, Mr. Irving."

Her tone, not her words, stung me, and I was mad that morning, as Irving said.

"If they are born to be hung, I suppose you mean, Mademoiselle? Thanks for your courtesy!" I exclaimed with more bitterness than the occasion would seem to warrant.

"As you please, Sir Lionel," she returned coldly. "I did not *say* that."

"Perhaps you think —" I spoke with a half sneer and I had entirely forgotten there were any listeners — "Perhaps you think I was making an idle boast and that I would not dare attempt the leap? I will show Mademoiselle that *Englishmen* always mean what they say."

I turned Saladin back as I spoke so as to get a better start that he might make a running jump, for it was indeed an ugly chasm, and I would give him every advantage. As I turned, her voice rang out clear and startling:

"If you do, Sir Lionel, I will follow you on Blackbird!"

I did not for a moment dream that she would, and I answered her only by a laugh of derision. In a moment I wheeled Saladin and came thundering down toward them and as I passed I could see her sitting Blackbird, a figure carved in marble, so white was she, but her eyes, flaming coals of fire. Saladin hesitated not a moment at the yawning chasm but gathered his feet up under him and went over it as if shot from a bow, landing well on the farther side a good two feet from the brink.

I rather expected applause for my dare-devil feat, from Irving at least, and I turned to receive it; but as I turned, my blood froze in my veins. Miss Desloge was in the act of wheeling Blackbird for the same mad leap.

"Stop her!" I shouted frantically, but so quick had been her movement and so slow were they in comprehending it, and so frozen with horror when they did, that no one moved a muscle.

I sprang from the saddle and stood ready to spring to Blackbird's bridle should she need it, and in that dreadful moment, with every muscle tense, every nerve quivering with horror, my Welsh inheritance took possession of me. It was no longer Miss Desloge for whose awful leap on Blackbird I was waiting, it was the little Rosie lying bruised and stunned in the ditch with Snowball.

I had to clear my brain with an effort, for at that moment Blackbird with her rider rose in the air and it seemed to me that I could tell from the way she rose that she was not going to clear the chasm. This was no little ditch such as Rosie Dufour and her pony fell into, it was a rocky abyss, a fall into whose depths meant certain death to horse and rider. How I cursed my folly! Yes and came near cursing hers also. How could she have been so mad! I hardly dared breathe lest any slightest movement of mine should cause horse and rider to swerve, but I stood with every faculty alert, every muscle tightened for the spring, when the moment should arrive. It was the agony of a lifetime, compressed into the brief seconds required for the leap. Blackbird's forefeet reached solid ground but her hind hoofs clattered on the rocky brink and struggling desperately she began to slip backward. Still almost afraid to move lest, startling the mare, I should make her lose her equilibrium, I nevertheless made one swift spring and clutched the bridle. With all my weight pulling her strongly forward and my voice encouraging her, she struggled up the bank and stood quivering with terror under the chestnut tree to which I led her a few rods away.

Not until I had quieted the horse did I look up at Miss Desloge.

"Will you get down, Mademoiselle?" I asked, extending my arms to assist her in dismounting, and wishing with all my heart that I had the inches and the strength of my big Philadelphia friend, that I might have lifted her from her saddle without stopping to question her. But she did not demur. I had spoken sternly, for only so could I command my voice to speak at all. Mademoiselle was very white, but she was not trembling as I was trembling. She did not answer me but she put out her arms and I lifted her from her saddle and set her on the ground beside me and for one unconscious moment I did not let her go.

The rest of the party on the other side of the chasm had waited breathless until they saw that Mademoiselle was safe, and now were out of sight behind the bluff hurrying down to the ford. With my arm still clasping Mademoiselle closely, and hardly conscious of it, my whole soul so devoutly thankful for her safety, and trembling yet at the thought of what she had so narrowly escaped, I stood looking down at her and uttered not a word. She was no longer white; the color was rushing back to her face in a flood. Neither was she any longer so coldly unmoved. At last she was trembling; her little chin was quivering and the tears were slowly brimming her brown eyes.

"Will you ever forgive me, Sir Lionel?" she whispered.

Forgive her! It was I who had so madly risked my own life and so wickedly induced her to imperil hers. Could I ever forgive myself? And where were the stern resolutions I had taken in West Point! All my soul was longing to draw her to my heart; to tell her I loved her madly, foolishly but devotedly; to beg her to forget my folly and to crown my life with her love. In another moment I would have cast all prudence to the winds; all my promises to my father and all my doubts of the beautiful Frenchwoman, and my suspicions of her relations to the handsome La Force. But in that very moment there were shouts from the ford below. I glanced over my shoulder; the whole party led by Mr. Livingston were coming rapidly up the steep incline toward us. Miss Desloge sprang quickly away from me, but only within arm's length, and as the shouts and the clatter of hoofs came rapidly nearer, she asked me again:

"Can you forgive me?"

"Mademoiselle," I said, "it is very hard when I remember how nearly you lost your life."

"But I only followed you." She looked up, a twinkling smile struggling with her tears. "And I told you I would."

"I forgive you this time," I answered, smiling back at her and speaking softly, "if you will promise always to follow me. Will you?"

She looked up, but not at me. She was all rosy red, but her voice was calmness itself.

"I was very silly and very foolhardy, Mr. Livingston," she said deprecatingly. "I hope you and Miss Livingston will excuse me. I fear it is my temperament, never to be willing to see anyone attempt a daring feat without trying to do the same."

And Mr. Livingston, looking down on her from his horse, and smiling fatuously, as all men smiled on her, turned sternly to me:

"Sir Lionel, you are greatly to blame."

I bowed my head to his censure which I knew I richly deserved, but I cared but little for it, for the heart within me was singing a song sweeter and more exultant than it had sung for many a day.

XVIII

DESPAIR RETURNS WITH ME TO CLERMONT

I DID not ride by Miss Desloge much of the way to Montgomery Place, and when I did, Mr. Livingston was on her other side keeping jealous guard, so that I began to wonder whether he was guarding Mademoiselle for himself or against me. It almost looked like the latter, for, when Irving rode up beside her, Mr. Livingston often fell back and gave place, but never to me.

This began to be annoying, and there was so much I wanted to say to Mademoiselle, and that was pounding at the portals of my lips for utterance, that I found his surveillance very hard to brook. Yet it had one result that perhaps, after all, was for the best; it gave me time to think. For I could think while Miss Livingston was talking to me, or Kemble, or Irving. I could have done nothing but feel, blindly and uncontrollably, and no doubt would have spoken rashly and unwisely had I been beside Miss Desloge with none to hear.

It gave me time to remember my promise to my father. What was I to do about it! I had gone too far in that moment when, with my arm about Mademoiselle, I had looked into her eyes with all my heart in mine, not to go farther. I was bound in honor to her, but I was also bound in honor to my father.

There was but one thing to do. Somehow I must manage to ride alone with Miss Desloge on our return from Montgomery Place and I would make a clean breast to her. I would tell her about Peggy and how bitterly I regretted my foolishness, and how I was bound by my promise to my father never again to engage myself in marriage without his consent. But I would tell her, also, that there could be no doubt in the world of my father's approval, could he but see and know her; and since that was impossible, I still thought his consent would readily be given when I should write him and tell him all about her. If necessary, I would ask Mr. Livingston to write also, or Miss Livingston, since the word of either would carry great weight with my father; though I confess I was troubled a little when I thought of asking either of them, at the uncomfortable remembrance that Mr. Livingston seemed antagonistic to me (perhaps because he desired Miss Desloge for himself) and Miss Livingston had so frequently shown herself arbitrary and unkind to Mademoiselle — (could it be because she had any designs on me?). Oh, the conceit of youth!

Nevertheless, having determined on my line of action, I was happy, although no longer elated, and I rode along soberly but cheerfully to Montgomery Place. Now I had greatly liked every member of the Livingston family I had met; even Miss Livingston, when she was not hectoring Miss Desloge, could be most charming; but Mrs. Montgomery, whom I had been most anxious to see as the widow of the great general and martyr, one of my heroes of history, proved to be more charming than any of the family I had met so far. She was standing on the broad piazza of her house, facing the lawns sloping down to the great river and the blue line of the Catskills across the river. She was waiting to receive us as we cantered up the driveway, and she knew how to be grande dame and cordial hostess in one, for in a moment she had made the two strangers of the party, Miss Desloge and myself, as perfectly at home as if we had been old friends. By her side stood my young friend, William Jay, who came eagerly forward, as soon as he had performed his shy and blushing devoirs to Miss Desloge, to greet Saladin and me. I was glad to see the boy's bright face again, and I told him that when he came over to Clermont he should try Saladin, and perhaps he would want to take him home with him.

We had passed, on our way up to the house, a pompous-looking man and a rather haughty-looking lady driven in a curricle by a coachman in livery, and when our greetings were well over Mr. Livingston turned to his sister:

"Was that not Mr. Livingston Burrows and his wife that we met just driving out as we came in?" he asked her.

"It was indeed," she answered.

"I am surprised you did not ask them to stay to dinner," said her brother in mild reproof.

"Oh, Edward!" she shrugged her shoulders impatiently; "I was so sick of them! They spent the night here and I have been all morning trying to get rid of them before you should arrive. They are so stupid, and you know we are not used to dull people in our family. I can't stand them."

Mr. Livingston laughed. He knew his sister and he knew she was right — they were not used to dull people in the Livingston family and had but little patience with stupidity of any kind. I began to wonder if it was because Mr. Livingston had found me dull that he had so changed in his manner to me, and I longed greatly to acquit myself with credit at Mrs. Montgomery's table, to which we were shortly summoned, both because I did not want to bore that lady, whose animated face and gracious manner had won my liking at once, and because I more than ever desired to shine in Miss Desloge's eyes. But for both of these reasons, I believe, I was under more than usual constraint, and while I never made a greater effort to be entertaining, I believe I never made a greater failure of it. Mrs. Montgomery, however, at whose right I sat, did not seem to think so; she laughed at all my small jokes, some of which she repeated to the table, and she constantly drew me out on my life at home, in which she professed the deepest interest. What pleased me still more, as an evidence of her friendliness, she talked much of her "Soldier boy," as she called her hero-husband, and told me many thrilling tales of his bravery, and the sad one of his gallant death on the Plains of Abraham. She was altogether charming, and I wished with all my heart that I could have been more brilliant to please her.

But if I was dull, Mademoiselle was not. I had never known her anything else than wise and witty in her conversation, but she was outdoing herself to-day, fairly sparkling with a saucy humor that I could see Mr. Livingston and Mr. Irving were finding very enchanting; and young Will was hanging on her lips like one bewitched. I wondered if it was the excitement of her ride and its perilous adventure that was making her even more brilliant than usual and I knew very well that her brilliancy was partially responsible for my stupidity — it was impossible not to have one ear strained to catch the speeches that kept her end of the table so hilarious, while trying with the other to be dutifully attentive to Mrs. Montgomery.

Mrs. Montgomery's dinner was like most of the dinners I had had in America, very good indeed. The American cookery is more French than English, with many dishes that are neither French nor English but altogether delightful, and I confess to a keen enjoyment of the pleasures of the table. Yet I was not sorry when the dinner was ended. It was nearly five o'clock when we men, counting Will as a man, followed the ladies into the drawing-room for coffee. The days were growing shorter and I was anxious to be on that homeward ride before dark, for I was determined to secure Mademoiselle for part of it, since I had much to say to her. It was half past five by the time we were started and I found myself riding with young Will Jay, who had accepted Miss Livingston's invitation to Clermont eagerly, as much I believe for the sake of Miss Desloge as for the chance of a ride on Saladin.

But if I was riding with Will the first part of the way, I had a very definite plan in mind by which I should secure Mademoiselle for the latter part of the ride. I did not put it into execution until we arrived at the ford over White Clay Kill. Miss Desloge and Mr. Livingston were in advance, but their horses stopped to drink at the ford, as did the other horses as they came up. I rode into the water and checked Saladin by the side of Blackbird.

"Miss Desloge," I said loud enough to be sure that Mr. Livingston heard, "I have an idea that Blackbird and Saladin are the fleetest horses here. Will you ride forward with me and put it to the proof after we have crossed the kill?"

I saw Mr. Livingston look up quickly and start to speak, but he restrained himself, though I could perceive that he listened anxiously for Miss Desloge's reply.

"Do you mean to race them? Oh, I should love it," she answered with her eyes sparkling.

"Beware of Sir Lionel, Miss Desloge," interposed Mr. Livingston smilingly; "he may lead you into peril again."

Although he spoke jestingly I felt his reproof and hastened to reassure him.

"Indeed, sir," I said earnestly, "I am too sensible of my former folly, and was too shocked at Miss Desloge's deadly peril ever to lead her into the like again."

"A peril from which Sir Lionel alone had the presence of mind to rescue me," said Miss Desloge, speaking quickly and with a little glance of defiance at Mr. Livingston.

I could not understand her manner to Mr. Livingston. I admired him so greatly in spite of his change of demeanor to me, that I did not quite like her little air of defiance which I had twice noted. Neither did Mr. Livingston, I suppose, though, except for a slight increase of color he ignored it.

"Very well, my children!" he said, with an exaggerated air of benevolence; "young people must be young, I suppose, and cannot be expected to heed the warnings of their elders. Only, pray, do nothing rash, Miss Desloge."

This last, it seemed to me, was said with a certain significance that made me color in my turn. But our horses had finished drinking and we left the others still grouped picturesquely in the shallow waters of the ford, sparkling over their pebbly bed in the last rays of the setting sun, and slowly climbed the steep hill that led up from the ford on the farther side. Once well up on the level road we stopped for a moment, dazzled by the beauty that lay around and below us. At our feet was the rocky and picturesque cañon through which the little kill dashed in a series of foaming cascades before it reached the quiet waters of the ford. Behind us rose a hill rich with verdure, and every maple, birch and somber fir stood out with separate distinctness in the level rays of the rapidly-sinking sun. A little beyond, the towers of the Chateau of Tivoli among its trees, and still further on the many windows of Rose Hill, were catching those same rays and blazing in reflected glory. Below us lay the Hudson — broad here, since the little kill emptied into North Bay — its placid waters a sea of molten gold; and across the river, a little to the north, the purple Catskills had gathered about them a gorgeous canopy of crimson and gold with which to shelter the slumbers of the Old Man of the Mountains.

We were silent for a while, as one must needs be in the presence of great beauty, and then Mademoiselle sighed.

"Such a wonderful land!" she exclaimed.

"Would you like to make your home in it?" I asked, trembling a little at my own question, for I was thinking of Mr. Livingston, who seemed so greatly pleased with her; of the gay Irving, who seized every opportunity of being near her; but most of all was I thinking of the hateful La Force and his flowers. Her answer relieved that fear, but it did not give me perfect satisfaction.

"Oh, no," she said with a light blush, for I think she recognized my purpose in asking; "oh, no, I do not think I would be willing to live anywhere out of my own country."

This was my moment for making my confession and telling her that I hoped much she would some day be willing to live out of La Belle France in Merry England; but the hoofs of the other horses were clattering up the rocky hill behind us and rapidly drawing near.

"Now for our race, Miss Desloge," I said. "I would like to put a good mile between us and the others, and I believe we can."

I spoke hurriedly, and she answered by a quick glance of comprehension and a light touch of her whip on Blackbird's flank. We were off in a flash, and the others having by now reached the level road were hard after us, Irving and young Will shouting and spurring their horses determined to overtake us, but the rest only making a pretense of it.

It was as I thought. Blackbird and Saladin were far fleeter than the other horses and a very few minutes carried us out of sight and hearing of the rest of our party. When we were so far ahead there would be no danger, at least for a while, from either Irving or Will, I checked both horses with a word. Miss Desloge looked as if she would like to remonstrate at my presuming to control Blackbird, but I gave her no chance.

"We have proved it, Mademoiselle," I said, "and I have secured my chance to say to you what, if it were left unsaid, would give me no rest to-night."

"An invalid's rest must not be disturbed," she murmured with a teasing smile.

"I am an invalid no longer, Miss Desloge, though I could wish I were, if I could continue to receive the services of my nurse," I answered, well knowing she liked no reference to her nursing. And then I hastened on, for looking down on her (Saladin was a good two hands taller than Blackbird and I liked the sensation) I could see her vexed look, and I did not want to anger her.

"Miss Desloge," I said, "you did not answer me when I asked you to follow me always, and I do not want you to answer me until I have told you something you have a right to know." Then, with much halting, I have no doubt, I told her why I had come to America; sent by my father to break off a very foolish affair, which did not seem to me foolish at the time, and in which I had resented my father's interference and acted altogether as any headstrong boy would act in his first love affair. I told her how I had at last discovered that my father was right and I was wrong; that the young woman was married to another man almost before she had said good-by to me; and that my father could not regard the whole affair as more foolish than I now saw it to be, nor regret it half so deeply.

Through the whole recital I spoke of it as an episode of my youth, long since past and to be forgiven to a very young boy, and yet it was hardly three months since that evening on the Cher under the walls of Magdalen, when I had said good-by to Peggy. Of course I did not mention her name, nor her profession, but I can see now that I must have seemed the veriest little prig to Miss Desloge, with my lofty airs and my moralizing over my own youthful folly. I did not look at her much while I was telling it, for I had the grace to be embarrassed, but I remembered afterward that when I did glance at her once or twice her expression puzzled me, and embarrassed me still more.

I finished my recital by telling her of my promise to my father, never again to make an engagement of marriage without first obtaining his consent.

"Therefore, Mademoiselle," I concluded, "I cannot enter into an engagement until I hear from my father, but I am sure he will think I have chosen wisely this time and I do not think we need fear he will not give his consent."

Oh, what a conceited puppy I was in those days! I was very genuinely in love with Miss Desloge, and I was not conscious of any feeling of condescension in the rich Sir Lionel proposing to the poor dependent, Miss Desloge, and certainly I had no intention of speaking in a patronizing fashion. Just as certainly Miss Desloge had never given me any reason to be sure of her answer; why I should have spoken as if she were as anxious for my father's consent as I, I cannot understand, except that it must have been that the gods were jealous of me.

"It is very kind of you, Sir Lionel, to tell me all this," she said icily. "I have been much interested, but I fear it has been an embarrassment to reveal your intimate history to one who is so much of a stranger as Miss Livingston's French companion must be to the young English baronet. I appreciate the honor you do me in your conditional proposal, but I beg you will not annoy your father by writing him about me at all. One impossible love affair in a young man's life should be sufficient."

"Miss Desloge!" I began angrily and stopped short. I was hot to my finger tips and choked with angry sensations; my eyes were almost blinded by the rush of blood to them, but I had sense enough left to perceive that I had made a terrible botch of an interview that I had intended to be frank and friendly and *wise*. That was it! There lay my blunder!

What has wisdom to do with love! If I had cast prudence to the winds, no doubt Miss Desloge would have listened to me kindly and answered me very differently. No woman wants a man to stop and weigh his words when he is trying to win her heart.

I paused long enough after my first violent "Miss Desloge" to say all this to myself, and to try to persuade myself that the iciness of her tone, the lurking sarcasm in her speech, probably arose from pique. Perhaps she did not like the thought of Peggy or, perhaps I had seemed too cocksure. She evidently thought I was patronizing her; no doubt she thought I believed that a dependent "companion" would jump at the chance of marrying a rich young baronet. I grew still hotter at the thought, but I would show her I was meekness itself.

"Miss Desloge," I began again, "it was embarrassing, as you have supposed, to disclose my folly to you. If I had not thought I was disclosing it to a friend who would, at least, feel some interest in it, I would have hesitated long before doing so, though I felt the disclosure was due before I could honestly ask you to be my wife. If I have been mistaken — if I have been thinking of you as a friend where you have thought of me only as the 'stranger' you have called me, you must indeed have found me presumptuous, and I must accept your severe rebuke without a murmur. I can see, now, how foolish I have been to cherish hopes that you have never given me the slightest excuse for cherishing. You are right to remind me that I ought not to make myself a fool twice — once in loving unworthily and once in setting my hopes too high. I hear horses, Mr. Irving and Will, I suppose; shall we stop and wait for them?"

For answer she gave Blackbird a sharp cut with her whip, and Blackbird was away on the very wings of her namesake in a moment. I could not have held Saladin back if I had tried, with Blackbird flying before him, and I did not try. With great leaps and bounds he was beside the little mare in a trice, and neck and neck they thundered down the road.

Not until we were well out of all danger of sight and sound of the horses behind us did Miss Desloge draw rein. Then she spoke very sweetly and seriously and without a sign of that twinkle in her eye that I always found meant mischief.

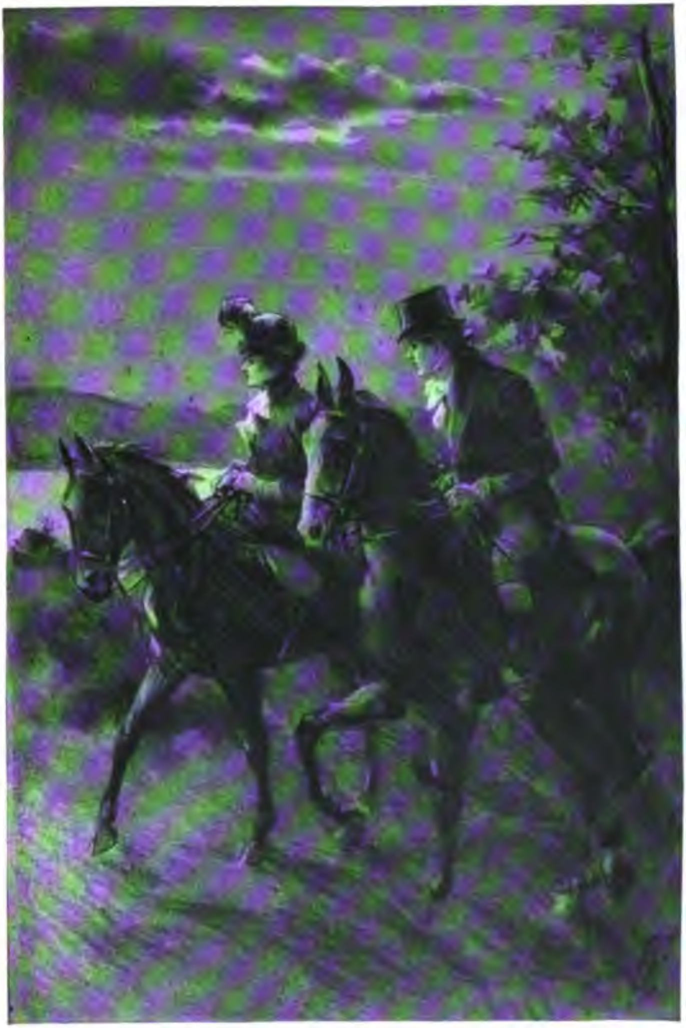
"It was not nice of me to speak as I did, Sir Lionel," she said, "and I beg your forgiveness. I *was* very deeply interested in what you told me, and I thought it very kind and good of you to tell me what I know you found it hard to tell. But I meant what I said about not annoying your father. Please do not write to him of me; it would be useless to make him trouble for naught and—*I will never marry anyone but one of my own countrymen.*"

As she said this last I thought I caught a fleeting glimpse of that wicked twinkle. If I did, it was gone in a flash, and I was puzzled to know why it should have appeared at such a moment. Was she mocking me?

But I did not stop to dwell on that—I was too overwhelmed by her last words—"I will only marry one of my own countrymen." Then it was Mr. La Force, after all, and there was indeed no hope for me. I think had she said anything but just what she did say, I would not have despaired so easily, but I had felt, from the moment I had first met Mr. La Force, that he was to be, in some way, my evil genius, and now he had proved it.

I was silent for a long time, looking down on that great river that now lay a silver flood in the moonlight (for the harvest moon had come up over the hills as we were thundering down that last bit of road together) and seeing only a silver blur, for a death-knell had rung in my heart and I was still a boy, and the tears lay not so far away as they do now that I am nearing the psalmist's boundary of life.

There may be those who think I could not have cared very greatly. That if three months before one grande passion had been breaking my heart, another could not be shattering it now. Then if there be any who think so they do not know the heart of youth, or they do not know my heart, and most of all they do not know the difference between Peggy and Miss Desloge. Peggy could inspire a foolish boy's mad passion, Miss



I was silent for a long time

Desloge could win a man's most fervent love and truest affection.

And if I sometimes speak of myself as boy and sometimes as man, it is because I was both. In this age I would no doubt at twenty (I was nearly twenty) seem the veriest boy; in that, we were men at eighteen — though not come into our legal rights — and often as not married and with families around us before we were twenty. Therefore, though there were boyish tears in my eyes, I believe it was with a man's heart that I loved Miss Desloge, and though a great despair was in my soul, I believe that it was with something of the resolution of a man that in a very few moments I got control of my voice and turned to her.

"It is final, Mademoiselle, and I accept it as such. Your countryman is greatly to be congratulated; perhaps some day I shall have conquered this unhappy love to such a degree that I may be able to offer him my congratulations in person; shall we ride on?"

And as we ambled along quietly together, lingering, that those in the rear might overtake us, Mademoiselle talked of many things so sweetly, so kindly, and so evidently with intention to cheer me, that hope began almost to revive a little under her gentle ministrations.

At last our talk fell on the laying of the corner-stone of the new City Hall in New York. It was to take place in a week or ten days, and Mayor Livingston was to perform the ceremony. It was to be a great occasion, and it had been our theme at Mrs. Montgomery's dinner table, as it had been our theme many times before at Clermont. For we had planned to go down, a large party of us, by horseback, for the great occasion. We were to spend one night at Mrs. Montgomery's and one night at the Van Cortlandt Manor and so break the journey, which in the estimation of the younger people of the party was to be one grand frolic through the lovely October weather.

Now as we talked of it, I noted an embarrassment in Miss Desloge's manner that I could not account for. It was I who had lost zest — for had I not counted on that long, delightful ride down the picturesque old post road, through the beautiful October, and Saladin by Blackbird's side? I had lost zest — it seemed now but a dismal prospect for me — but Miss Desloge was embarrassed. Presently she seemed to screw her courage to the point of saying something difficult.

"Sir Lionel," she began, hesitating, "do you know that Mr. Livingston greatly desires that you will not attend the laying of the corner-stone?"

"Mr. Livingston exceeds his privilege!" I exclaimed haughtily. "He is, in a sense, my host, but he certainly cannot think it is a host's place to interfere with a guest's pleasures."

"No," said Miss Desloge quickly, "Mr. Livingston would never attempt to do that. I am sure he is kindness itself."

"Nor need he fear that I will interfere with his," I went on, more haughtily still. "If he once did me the honor to regard me as a rival, I shall take pains to let him understand that I am not to be so regarded any longer."

"Sir Lionel!" Miss Desloge exclaimed, deeply offended, and I was brought to my senses with a shock.

"Forgive me, Mademoiselle," I begged humbly.

She only noticed my words with a slight nod as she hurried on indignantly:

"You accuse Mr. Livingston of cherishing hopes that have never occurred to him. But if he had any such hopes he is the last man to use such means of attaining to them. *You* could not be guilty of such a mean spirit, why do you think it possible to him?"

"You are right, Mademoiselle, he is the last man I could think of as guilty of any meanness," I answered contritely. "But, Miss Desloge, I was beside myself when I spoke. I am not quite responsible, you must understand. And do you know any reason why I should not go to New York, or why Mr. Livingston should not want me to go?"

She hesitated and another miserable suspicion flashed into my mind.

"Did Mr. Livingston tell you to persuade me not to go?" I asked sternly.

"Not — exactly — he said he hoped you would not go and — he asked me if I thought I had any influence with you to persuade you to stay at Clermont. I told him I would do my best, but I see I have no 'influence.' I ought not to have tried," giving me a fleeting glimpse of that twinkle as she spoke.

"But, surely, *you* do not want me to stay away from New York, do you, Miss Desloge?"

"Yes, Sir Lionel," she answered earnestly, "I want it very much, indeed. I think I am more anxious that you should not go down to New York with our party than even Mr. Livingston can be."

"And you will not tell me why?"

"I cannot tell you why."

And all the rest of that beautiful moonlight ride, sometimes beside Mademoiselle, sometimes beside Miss Livingston, and sometimes riding on ahead fast and furious by myself, I pondered her words and puzzled my brain to know her reason. Sometimes I said to myself bitterly, she wants me out of the way when Mr. La Force is there! but I knew that was an unworthy suspicion and I could find no other reason that satisfied me. As we sat around a late supper table, tired and hungry from our long ride, but most of the party in the high spirits that a day spent in the open always generates, I pondered it again under cover of the loud and gay talk and I came to but one conclusion:

Miss Desloge says she does not want me to go down to New York with their party — I will obey her to the letter. I will not go down with the party (ah, me, for the lovely rides, the gay evenings at Montgomery Place and Van Cortlandt Manor House that I had been looking forward to with such keen delight)! I would not go with the party, but I would be at the laying of the corner-stone and see for myself why Miss Desloge did not want me there.

XIX

I DISCOVER WHY MISS DESLOGE BEGGED ME TO STAY IN CLERMONT

I TOLD no one of my plan; I let them think I had acquiesced in Mr. Livingston's wishes and would stay at Clermont. That is, I told no one but Mr. Irving and Will Jay, and I did not tell them, until I was compelled to. For as soon as they heard I was not going to New York with the others they both insisted they would stay with me in Clermont; and there was no budging them from their determination until I confessed to them, confidentially, that I intended to follow the party a day later and be present, incog., at the laying of the corner-stone. Nor did I feel that in this I was deceiving Mr. Livingston. I had not told him I would not go to New York — he had not asked that. He had only asked that I would not go down with his party. I believed his reasons for doing so had something to do with Miss Desloge, but I felt that, in spite of his former kindness and courtesy to me, his later manner had freed me from any further allegiance to him than simple accordance with the letter of his request.

As I explained to Will and Mr. Irving, I should mingle with the crowd, and, being rather short of stature, I thought I could easily lose myself in the throng. Whereupon they both maintained, stoutly, that they too would give out that they would remain at Clermont with me, and we would all three ride down to New York together, and together be present at the ceremony "in disguise," Irving called it. He was ever eager for adventure and this seemed to him an enticing one.

But I would not listen to him. I knew it would be a real sacrifice to the gay, pleasure-loving, beauty-adoring Irving to miss that journey to New York in the company of the lovely

Frenchwoman, and to miss the festivities that had already been planned for at Montgomery Place and Van Cortlandt Manor House. I promised to see him in New York at the City Tavern, where I should put up, but I absolutely refused to allow him to stay with me. With Will I was not so firm; if he really wanted to wait for me, there was no reason why he should not, and I liked the boy and would be glad of his company.

If anyone who reads this has ever been shut up in a house for a week with a young lady he is madly in love with, who has rejected him as a lover and yet is all sweetness and gentleness when she meets him, he can have some faint idea of what I went through the next week. There were times when I was in the blackest despair; there were times when I said to myself — She is a false-hearted coquette; I would not have her if I might; then there were times, when I believed there was still hope for me, but there never was a moment when I was not so absorbed in thoughts of her that I could think of little else; so given up to planning ways of seeing her and talking with her that I was good for nothing else. It was almost a relief when the moment came for departure and Will and I waved a farewell from the terraces in front of the house as the little company of five cantered down the avenue of maples toward the great gates. Their party was to be increased at Montgomery Place and, indeed, all along the route; by the time they reached the city, it would no doubt be a throng.

It was a lonely day and evening that we two spent in the big house by ourselves. I was poor company for the lad, though I made every effort to amuse him, for my heart was lead in my bosom. In my thoughts I was following Mademoiselle Desloge every step of the way. I seemed to know exactly when Mr. Livingston rode by her side and when he gave up his place to Mr. Irving. I followed them through the ford at White Clay Kill and I cantered by Miss Desloge's side up the avenue of elms to the broad piazza where Mrs. Montgomery stood awaiting her guests; and, in fancy, I heard her inquiries why I was absent and heard Mr. Livingston's lame excuses. But most of all through the evening did my spirit haunt the great hall at

Montgomery Place and see Miss Desloge walk, hand in hand, through stately minuets and formal cotillions, with the young squires from the neighboring country seats. For it had been part of the plan of festivities that there should be a dance at Montgomery Place and I was very sure Miss Desloge would be the belle of the ball, eagerly sought after by every young American with eyes in his head, or wit in his brains, or music in his heels.

Whether Will did not notice my abstraction, against which I made tremendous struggles, or whether he was too polite to appear to notice it, I could not be sure, but I thought he was not sorry when I proposed an early bed hour since we were to make an early start in the morning, as was necessary if we would accomplish with ease the long ride to Tarrytown, where we were to put up for the night. My spirits rose as I found myself on the road following in her footsteps, and every step of the way my heart grew lighter. There was something, no doubt, in the intoxicating October air and the amazing beauty of river and shore that drove despair from a man's heart. I began to believe my case could not be altogether hopeless. Did not a woman always say "no" at first? Was not a maiden always to be wooed before she was won? I had not half wooed her. No doubt I had made my declaration too suddenly — she was not prepared. I could not expect her to be so rashly and entirely infatuated as I on such short acquaintance. I would note the expression in her countenance when I should come upon her unexpectedly in New York. Perhaps I might surprise the light of gladness in her eyes, for it is at such moments that the eyes speak more truly than the lips.

Yet always when I was comforting myself with such thoughts and resolving upon a more determined suit when I should again see Miss Desloge in New York, there came the remembrance of that one sentence — "I will never marry any man but one of my own countrymen" — and in a moment all my elation left me to the prey of dull despair. It was in that mood I rode out of the courtyard of Van Tassel's Inn near Tarrytown the next morning, Will and Scipio following me and their horses' hoofs making a cheerful clatter on the granite cobbles of the court. The dawn was a pale gray streak in the east, a disreputable old moon leered at me over the ridge of the quaint, ivy-clad Sleepy Hollow church, and I looked around among the venerable headstones in the little churchyard, more than half expecting to see the headless horseman careering over the graves. For the first time I began to feel some misgivings as to the wisdom of my insisting on going to New York against the advice of my friends. Mr. Livingston was not the man to request me to remain in Clermont without some solid reason for so doing, and to have suspected Miss Desloge of any such petty motive as desiring to have me out of the way of my successful rival was unworthy of myself and an insult to her. There was some reason why I ought not to go to New York; some reason for their earnest entreaties — for Mademoiselle had, indeed, implored me not to go. Perhaps some peril lay in wait for me there from which my friends would save me.

I think had I remained many minutes longer in this frame of mind I would have wheeled Saladin and galloped back to Clermont. But the gray dawn brightened to rose, the leering old moon paled beneath the rays of the rising sun, Will cantered up to my side and challenged me to a race, and I threw forebodings to the winds.

That night we spent at Bedford House, Will's home, and there I met his mother, the famous beauty of the Republican Court. These Livingstons were a handsome race, but Mrs. Jay was the beauty par excellence of the family. Her sister, Mrs. Kitty Livingston, was gay and charming, and her cousins, Mrs. Montgomery and my Miss Livingston of Clermont, were beautiful and fascinating women, but not one of them had the graceful bearing, the faultless features, the beaming eye and dazzling smile of this regal creature. I could easily understand the story often told of her, that once, on entering the opera house in Paris, the whole audience rose, taking her for the youthful queen, Marie Antoinette. That was many years before and she was no longer youthful, but she was in the rich maturity of those charms that had made her famous in England, France and America.

Will was proud of his beautiful mother, as well he might be, and I did not doubt that it was for the sake of showing her to me that he had insisted on our spending the night at Bedford House, which was somewhat out of our direct course to the city. Of his father I stood a little in awe, for he had the dignity of bearing proper to a statesman of his repute, though he was sufficiently gracious to Will's friend, as he was pleased to call me. Once only did he thoroughly unbend to me, but when he did, he charmed and fascinated me as few women have done.

Bedford House was almost the most beautiful, both for situation and for grace of architecture, of any of the American places I had yet seen. To stand on the terrace before the house, where the mile-long avenue of elms began, was to look off over a rolling country of meadow-land and rich forests, watered by countless winding streams and bounded in one direction by the broad waters of the Sound and in the other by the stately Hudson, bearing on its bosom many white-sailed sloops and schooners on their way to and from the great city — for so all good Americans regard the thriving town of New York. The house itself was low and broad, a mingling of several styles, I should think, and covered by a beautiful ivy, differing much from our English ivy, and already turning in places to a rich crimson that gave the house the effect of being carved from a glowing ruby set in dark porphyry. The library occupied an entire wing and had been built on by Mr. Jay. It was a noble room, with one rounded end in which was built a fireplace wide enough to hold our English yule logs with ease. The room was lined with bookcases holding Mr. Jay's fine library containing many rare editions, at sight of which my old love of books returned with a rush, and had I been greatly urged at that moment to stay at Bedford House, and been given the freedom of this room, whose rich mahogany furnishings, luxurious reading chairs, and the flames blazing and leaping up the wide throat of the chimney (for the evening was a frosty one) made it an enchanting room to a book-lover, I think I might easily have given up my New York trip.

But that moment passed. Later, when we had climbed a lofty hill near the house and Will, eagerly pointing out to me the objects of interest in the landscape, showed me, to the southwest, where the East River met the Sound, a glittering dot that he said was the cross on Trinity Church shining in the evening sun, Mr. Jay turned to me with his polite hope that I would spend some time with them. But the flashing spire of Trinity had proved a beacon light to my desire. Not far from that spot Mademoiselle Desloge was perhaps at this moment arriving, or already arrived, and resting from the fatigue of her long journey. I thanked Mr. Jay, but said it was imperative that I should be in New York the next afternoon. Whereupon, sending Will off on some pretext, after we had returned to the terrace by the house, he asked me to come with him for a moment into the library, he had something he wished to say. We had only to step through a low window directly into the room and when we had taken deep-armed, leather-cushioned chairs drawn up on either side of the blazing fire, he began at once, and there was no longer any hint of that stateliness of manner that had so awed me at first. He was, as I have said before, charming and fascinating to a degree I have found in few women; and with a winning tact not to be surpassed by any woman, he quickly drew from me the innermost secret of my heart.

"My dear Sir Lionel," he began, "I am an old man in comparison with your youth, and you are in a strange land; you will not be offended, I hope, if I take upon myself an old man's privilege of giving you some advice?"

I assured him that I would be very grateful for the advice, though I would not permit him to call himself an old man, and indeed he was as handsome and as youthful-looking for a man of middle age as I have often seen.

"Will tells me," he continued, "that you and he are traveling alone to New York because Mr. Livingston desired you to remain at Clermont, and while you did not promise, I gather that you allowed him to think that you were doing so when you permitted the party to start for New York without you. Am I right?"

I felt myself flushing painfully. I had thought of my trip to New York in the light of an adventure. Mr. Jay made me feel that my action was little less than dishonorable.

"I had not intended to deceive Mr. Livingston," I stammered. "I think his only reason for not wishing me to go to New York is that for some cause he no longer finds my presence as agreeable as he did at first. I have no intention of forcing myself upon his society in New York; indeed, he need not know I am in the city, and in that way, I think I can gratify his desire for my absence quite as well as if I had remained at Clermont."

Mr. Jay looked profoundly astonished at my speech, which I can now see was a remarkable one.

"Sir Lionel," he said, after a moment's silence, "do you know of any reason why Mr. Livingston should find your society no longer agreeable?"

"I *know* of no reason; I can only conjecture one." My face was burning and I could not lift my eyes to Mr. Jay's.

"Would you mind telling me your conjectures?" he asked so gently and with such a persuasive tone that I glanced up at him, and the smile in his kind eyes won me. I blurted out my secret in hot and angry haste.

"Mr. Livingston," I said, "was courtesy itself to me — no father could have been kinder — until he became interested in a young lady in whom I also am deeply interested. And although I have no claims upon the young lady and not the least chance of success with her, I cannot but think he thought his own chances better in my absence than in my presence."

Mr. Jay's look of astonishment had increased to dismay.

"Edward Livingston in love!" he ejaculated.

"Why not, sir? He is still young; a charming man and, what I have often heard is most potent with the ladies, a widower," I said sullenly.

Mr. Jay gazed at the fire a full minute before he turned to me again, but his look of dismay had given place to a cordial smile when he began to speak.

"And so, my dear young sir, you think all is fair in love?"

It was impossible to resist his smile, but I blushed again as I answered, "Yes, sir."

"And so it is!" he exclaimed heartily. "And if you are right in your conjectures, I cannot blame you for following my cousin and the young lady to New York; but, the more I think of it, the more I am convinced there must be some mistake. Mr. Livingston was very deeply attached to his wife, but of course I know it is possible for a man to love the second time, and no doubt the young lady is very beautiful and charming."

"More so than anyone I have ever known," I interrupted with conviction.

"Well, take it for granted our cousin has succumbed to her charms," he smiled sympathetically, "that does not explain his taking such an unfair advantage of you as to use his authority as host in persuading you to stay in Clermont and give him all the opportunities and advantages of that trip to New York in the company of the fair lady. Mr. Edward Livingston is not so known to me, Sir Lionel. He is the soul of courtesy and of honor. I do not believe it would be possible to him to use such means to advance his suit. I believe, instead, that he knows of some peril lying in wait for you in New York, and it is for your own sake that he begs you to remain at Clermont. Will you stay with us at Bedford House instead?"

"Mr. Jay," I answered, "I may have wronged Mr. Livingston — I hope I have; for he seemed to me as you have described him, the soul of courtesy and honor, and, in spite of my resentment at his apparent discourtesy, I still feel for him an admiration somewhat akin to hero-worship, for a hero he proved himself through the yellow fever. But if it is only some peril to myself he fears, I think I have every right to follow my own will. I know no fear, nor, indeed, any reason for fear, and I have a very great desire to be present in New York at the laying of the corner-stone."

Mr. Jay rose from his seat and grasped my hand.

"Sir Lionel," he said, "I am almost sure you are doing a foolish thing, such confidence have I in Mr. Livingston's judgment, but I am not going to try to persuade you further. In fact, I rather like your British obstinacy. I shall send Will with you to New York, not because I think he would be much help in danger, but he could at least be a messenger to inform your friends of your safety or your peril. And, since it is quite time he was on his way back to school in New Haven, New York will not be far out of the way."

How often in the next few days I wished I had heeded the request of Mr. Livingston, the entreaties of Mademoiselle and the advice of Mr. Jay. I believe most of my troubles in life have grown out of my obstinacy in pursuing my own course in opposition to the expressed wish of friends, but then some of my greatest successes have resulted from the same trait also, and, perhaps, while obstinacy is one of my greatest faults, it may also be one of my virtues.

We were later in arriving in the city than we had intended. A great throng filled the little park where the corner-stone was to be laid. I had not thought the town held so many people. But Will told me proudly that there were nearly sixty thousand people in the city, and, great as the throng seemed, it certainly did not nearly reach that number. We had left our horses with Scipio near the Freshwater Pond and Mr. Livingston was just rising to speak as we slipped in among the straggling fringes of the crowd. I do not think he saw us and my glance sped past him to a group seated on the platform near him. In the center of the group sat Miss Desloge, Irving on one side of her, La Force on the other, each wearing an air of gallantry and devotion. As my glance fell on her, her eyes met mine. She started slightly, but there was no light of glad surprise in her eyes as I had fondly hoped; instead, a dismay, that amounted almost to terror, widened them to a painful stare. In a moment, she recovered herself and turned with an air of nervously eager interest to answer some speech Mr. La Force addressed to her, but not, I believe, before he had noted her startled glance and discovered its cause. Not that I could perceive that he had discovered it. He did not seem to glance in my direction, and since I had a feeling, wholly unaccountable, that he was not to be trusted and that he had designs of some kind against me, I kept in the thickest of the throng, with men who towered head and shoulders above me between me and the line of his vision. Yet once the man in front of me stepped aside and disclosed Mr. La Force's seat on the platform vacant and Mademoiselle's glances scanning the throng before her restlessly and eagerly, I thought, and I could not reason myself out of a vague feeling of uneasiness.

I was hardly as surprised, therefore, as I might otherwise have been, when a hand was suddenly laid on my shoulder from behind me and a voice spoke low in my ear:

"I hope you will make no disturbance, Sir Lionel, but come with me quietly to the Bridewell yonder; I hold a warrant for your arrest in my pocket."

I glanced up quickly. A big, burly constable looked down into my eyes with a glance of steely determination that convinced me at once that resistance was useless. He wore no uniform, but, as I hesitated a moment, he opened his coat slightly and displayed his officer's badge.

Involuntarily I glanced around for Mr. La Force. He was nowhere in sight. Will, on the other side of me and wholly engrossed in Mr. Livingston's speech, which, though the attention I had been able to give it was but broken and distracted, I had yet discovered to be an eloquent one — had noticed nothing of what was happening to me. I turned to him and spoke low and hurriedly:

"Will, do not turn your head nor show any signs of excitement. I am arrested — I do not know for what, but I think it best to go quietly with the constable. As soon as the ceremonies are over, inform Mr. Livingston and bring him to the Bridewell, if he will come. Send Scipio and Saladin to the City Tavern. Good-by, my lad."

Will clutched the hand I extended to him convulsively, but turned toward me with an almost preternatural air of indifference, though his face was pale and his eyes were burning.

"The Bridewell!" he gasped in a choked voice. "You shall not sleep there, Sir Lionel — it must be all some horrible mistake."

"Yes, I am sure of it," I answered. "But do not take it too much to heart — it is bound to be cleared up as soon as I see Mr. Livingston."

Sauntering, with assumed carelessness, along the fringes of the throng toward the Bridewell, I saw Will slipping through the crowd and hurrying toward the tall Lombardy poplar where Scipio was holding our horses, and I was glad that his father had let him come with me to New York. In this strange new land, in this startling experience, I would indeed have felt forlorn and friendless but for this boy of sixteen.

Then my glance flew across the heads of the listening thousands to the platform. No one had noticed my arrest. It had been cleverly done without making the slightest stir. Not a man, as far as I knew, had interrupted his rapt listening to the speaker long enough to turn his head and gaze curiously at the ill-assorted pair — the burly officer of the peace and the slender stripling at his side, with his head in the air, whistling under his breath an air from Don Giovanni with a gayety the most casual observer, had there been any, must have seen was forced.

Straight over the heads of that careless throng my glance met another glance, seeking mine. I could not have told from the distance of the platform, had I not already known it, that the beautiful eyes into which I was looking were a winey brown, but expression carries farther than color. I could not mistake the look of concern, deepening to terror, in those eyes, and I knew two things:

One, that I had another friend beside that lad of sixteen, who would leave no stone unturned to help me; and the other was that *Mademoiselle Desloge knew why I was arrested though I did not; and the knowledge froze her very glance with terror, while it did not for a moment shake her trust in me.*

XX

THE SWEETS OF ADVERSITY

I PRAY that no friend of mine may ever descend into such black depths as I explored for the next three hours. I had confidently expected William to be back in a few minutes, bringing Mr. Livingston with him, and Irving also, no doubt, and that they would hasten to furnish bond for me and set me free. I could not believe that a son of my father, that any descendant of the Marchmonts, should ever spend a night in a common jail. But as the minutes wore away to quarters, to halves and then to hours, with no word from any of those I had called my friends, I began to believe that I had been deserted — that William, whom I had watched hurrying toward Scipio and the horses, was only hurrying to save himself; that Mr. Livingston and Mr. Irving were wholly indifferent to my fate; that Mademoiselle Desloge was rather glad than otherwise to have me safely out of Mr. La Force's way.

But always when I arrived at this point in my bitter meditations, I stopped short. No, I could not believe such baseness of Mademoiselle. Let all the world be false she, I could swear, was true to such friendliness as she was willing to grant me — as she had proved in this very matter of her earnest entreaty of me not to come to New York. If I had only listened to those entreaties! No, she might be unwilling to yield me more than her friendship, but loyal friend I could never doubt her to be.

As the hours wore away I sank into lower and lower depths of despondency. What would my father say, when he should hear that his only son, the heir of Clover Combe Court, had lain for weeks in an American jail; for it would be weeks before he could hear of my plight, and weeks more before the aid he would swiftly send could reach me and liberate me. In the bitterness of my soul, I had begun to believe no one in America would stir a finger to relieve a hapless English lad whom they believed guilty of so base a crime. Now I understood Mr. Livingston's sudden coldness and averted looks. They had dated from his first visit to his office, and if he believed me guilty of the crime of which I was accused, then I did not wonder and I could not blame. But I grew hot at the thought. How could any man *dare* to believe me guilty! These Americans had little generosity and less chivalry to believe so easily a baseless accusation.

For I knew, now, of what crime I was accused and who was my accuser. There had been a preliminary examination — a preliminary farce, I called it — before I was consigned to my cell in the Bridewell, and it was Mr. La Force, as I knew it would be, who answered the question — "Of what is the prisoner accused, and who accuses him?"

"Of embezzling the city's money, your Honor, and I make the charge in Mr. Livingston's name. I am Mr. Livingston's private secretary."

Then followed a number of questions to which I was too indignant to make suitable answer, or any answer at all part of the time. It was a foolish way of giving vent to my temper, for the judge, who at first was inclined to be lenient, losing his patience, at last, ordered me off to a cell, when I might, perhaps, by a more pacificatory course, have secured for myself temporary accommodations with the jailer.

It had been mid-afternoon, the early October sun shining brilliantly, when I entered the gloomy doors of the Bridewell; the evening shades had fallen when the key turned in the lock, my door was thrown open and I was conducted by the turnkey back to the room where I had passed my preliminary examination. Candles were already lighted in this room, and coming from the gloom of my cell my eyes were dazed for a moment, and to my confused senses the room seemed crowded with people. William was the first to rush forward and seize my right hand, and Irving, not far behind him, grasped the other. Irving was the first to speak:

"It is an outrage, Sir Lionel! Whoever is accountable for this shall suffer for it!" he exclaimed hotly.

"They arrested me, too, Sir Lionel," William exclaimed eagerly, almost in the same breath with Irving, "or I would have been here long ago. They called me *particeps criminis,* or something like that, and they kept me so long, badgering me with questions, that by the time they let me go — I told them I was John Jay's son and I would tell father, if they did n't! — by that time, Mayor Livingston had gone off somewhere, and I had a hard time finding him. But he 's here now and he 'll have you out in a jiffy."

I laughed at the boy's naïveté, and so did the others, and in the chorus of laughter I noted a silvery peal that set my blood to tingling, though I would not look in the direction from which it came.

"Thank you, William," I began; "I was sure you would not fail me." But Mayor Livingston came up at this moment with an outstretched hand, though an air of embarrassment sat oddly with his effort at cordiality.

"It is an outrage, Sir Lionel, as Mr. Irving says, but I fear I am not so powerful as young William Jay thinks me. I have been talking to Justice Smith here and he intimates that I am the last man to be interceding for you; that I should either be your accuser or take my place beside you on the culprit's bench. God knows, my dear young sir," he added fervently, "I would rather be in the Bridewell than have you here on my account, for the very fact that you would not heed my warning not to come to New York convinces me of your innocence in this matter."

My heart sank with every word he uttered. I had thought with young William, that now Mayor Livingston had come, I would be set free at once. Surely he was the most powerful man in the city, and surely he must know I could not be guilty of taking the city's money. He had said nothing about setting me free on bond and now I stammered forth a hint that

I hoped there might be someone in the city who would be willing to go on the bond of my father's son.

He answered me so sadly that for the moment I forgot my own suffering in sympathy for him.

"For evident reasons, my dear Sir Lionel, I could not go on your bond even had I the means to do so. Until this debt to the city is paid, I have not a cent I can call my own. My houses, my horses, my land, even my furniture and most of my personal belongings have been turned over to the city within the last two weeks. I am at present but a guest in the house where you and I were ill. But though I cannot go on your bond myself, I called at the homes of two of my friends on my way here, and they have come with me, eager to do what they can to set you free."

I had noted two gentlemen talking earnestly, and at moments excitedly, with the justice of the peace. Now, as Mr. Livingston spoke, they came forward, and Mr. Livingston presented me to them — a Mr. Roosevelt and a Mr. Bleecker, both evidently men of property and of influence, and both most courteous to me.

"But Justice Smith insists," said Mr. Roosevelt, when the first greetings and expressions of sympathy from them were over, "that this, being an offense against the State, does not allow the prisoner to be admitted to bail. Mayor Livingston, you can surely set him right on that point?"

But Mayor Livingston, being well versed in the law, could only admit that the justice was right, but that he hoped, the circumstances being peculiar, that the strict letter of the law might be interpreted more leniently. The three gentlemen set themselves to argue the matter once more and I could hear Mr. Roosevelt say, "We will gladly double the bond," but the justice was evidently immovable.

In the meantime, I could not refrain from glancing toward the corner whence I had heard that silvery peal of laughter. Miss Desloge was there and Miss Livingston and another lady whom I thought was Mrs. Montgomery, but could not be sure, since she stood outside the circle of candle-light. They were holding a whispered consultation, but Miss Desloge looked up as I glanced at them and smiled and bowed with great sweetness. I was embarrassed, no doubt, by my position, railed off from my friends and a jailer by my side, and so I did not return the smile and my bow was frigid, I fear. Moreover, I looked quickly away, though not before I had caught the swift look of pain that swept into her eyes. I was much startled, therefore, when, a moment later, I felt a light touch on my sleeve, and looking quickly around found Mademoiselle standing just outside the railing, her hand resting on my arm.

"Sir Lionel," she said softly, "it is very dreadful, but do not be discouraged; it will come out all right — *I know.*"

There was something in the sparkle of her eye and the firm set of her scarlet lips that convinced me she did know. How, I could not guess, but she inspired me with such courage that all my despair took flight, and with a good heart I thanked her for her faith in me and for her coming to me in my hour of trouble.

"Faith in you!" she echoed with a kind of wonder in her voice. "Why, even if I did not *know,* as I do, no one could doubt you for a moment — least of all, I."

Her "least of all, I," was very pleasant to hear, but the only answer I made her was a smile of thanks straight into her warm brown eyes, for at that moment Miss Livingston and Mrs. Montgomery came up, and professed to make light of the whole affair — for my sake, I knew.

"Let me shake hands with you, Sir Lionel," said Miss Livingston; "I am dying to shake hands with a real live prisoner. I never did, you know."

"I am glad you said 'prisoner,' and not 'criminal,' Miss Livingston," I answered, giving her hand a very hearty squeeze, for I liked her coming to my support while I was under suspicion.

"Criminal! Pooh!" she answered. "No one could possibly think of you as a criminal, Sir Lionel."

"It 's a martyr and a hero these girls will be making of you now, Sir Lionel," laughed Mrs. Montgomery. "I think you were attractive enough before, with your *bel air* and your *beaux yeux,* but the whole city will be running mad after you now that you have contrived such a romantic experience."

"Not of my contriving, Mrs. Montgomery. The gods forfend!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, perhaps not, but you cannot say that it was not well contrived to make you even more interesting to the maidens, if that were possible. What with posing first as a yellow fever invalid and now as a victim of false imprisonment, you must admit you are being most romantic as well as having all kinds of adventures, such as I understand your father sent you to America to seek."

I laughed, for the good humor of her raillery was contagious.

"I don't believe either yellow fever or imprisonment for stealing was in the category of adventures my father planned for me," I answered.

"No," she replied, no longer laughing, and with a cordial earnestness I liked much, "but if you bear the imprisonment with the firmness and courage with which you bore the other, they will both go far toward developing character, and that, I suppose, was your father's real reason for sending you to us."

And then the three gentlemen came back and there was not much encouragement to be read in their countenances; Mr. Roosevelt looked irascible, Mr. Bleecker disappointed, and Mr. Livingston deeply grieved. It was he who spoke:

"We cannot move the justice in the matter of bail, Sir Lionel; I fear you will have to put up with prison quarters for a while. Prison fare you shall not be reduced to; we will see that you have something to eat."

And, in fact, while he was still speaking, Scipio and another colored boy entered, bearing a great hamper between them, the contents of which were presently set out. And there being enough delicacies of all kinds in the hamper to provision a garrison, and the jailer being amiable, I was permitted to eat a somewhat belated dinner in his living-room, in the company of my friends. And in spite of the fact that a guard stood in the room, and that there was great indignation and some despondency lurking in the back of my mind, I have seldom eaten a merrier meal.

But to go back to Mayor Livingston's speech, which the entrance of the hamper did not interrupt as I have interrupted it. He told me that though he could not persuade the justice to admit me to bail, he had yet been able to persuade him that my case should be placed early on the docket. That he himself should at once attend to securing the best of counsel for me, and that just as soon as the case could be prepared, witnesses found, etc., it should go to trial, so that I might expect a very short stay in the Bridewell.

He spoke as if there was no doubt at all of my acquittal, and, indeed, I did not see how there could be, except that, possibly, in a new country, justice might be more easily perverted than at home, and — I had such a strong distrust of Mr. La Force and such a wholesome dread of his skill in accomplishing his nefarious purposes.

When my friends left me, I went back to my cell, which was horribly dirty, ill-ventilated and ill-lighted, and lay down on my hard pallet in a quieter frame of mind than I could have believed possible a few hours before. Nay, it was more than calmness, it was with a near approach to happiness that I lay looking at the pointers in Charles' Wain twinkling through my high, barred window. For Mademoiselle had come to me on leaving, and with the sweetest smile in her eyes she had whispered, "Remember, you are not to worry, for *I know*."

And surely I had felt a gentle pressure of her little hand returning my fervent one. If only she were an English lass! For even to win Mademoiselle I could not wish myself a Frenchman.

XXI

MR. HAMILTON MAKES TWO WAGERS

IT seemed that instead of these Americans being lacking in chivalry and generosity, as I had mentally accused them, they were the soul of both. I was given to understand that there was a rush of the most eminent counsel offering their services in my behalf. Even the Vice-president himself sent me word that, did not his official position prevent, nothing would have given him more delight than to take up the cudgels in my behalf. This, in face of the fact that Mr. La Force was a close friend of Mr. Burr. But then, I think, both Mr. Burr and Mr. Livingston believed Mr. La Force to be mistaken, but not malignant. They considered that he had been led astray by a peculiar net of circumstances, and they looked upon his action in accusing me merely as evidence of his over-zeal in his employer's service.

It was Mr. Hamilton, the great Hamilton, who was finally decided upon to conduct my defense, and opposed to him was the prosecuting attorney who had a reputation for skill, especially in the matter of conducting a cross-examination, almost equal to Hamilton's.

A great throng crowded the room where the trial was held, which was a large upper chamber in that very City Hall where I had spent two days in the mayor's office, and where I was supposed to have committed my crime. I could not, for a while, lift my eyes to face that curious throng, but, bethinking me that my downcast eyes might be taken by some as evidence of guilt, I found the courage to raise them and look calmly over the room. My soul shrank when I noted many women, and for a long time I would not look at any woman, fearing I would meet Miss Livingston's mocking gaze or Mademoiselle's pitying one. But after a while I was as powerfully impelled to look as I had been to refrain from looking, and I soon discovered the party of my friends, Irving and William and Kemble and every one of the Lads of Kilkenny, a little coterie surrounding a group of women, where I soon recognized Mrs. Hamilton's sweet, motherly face, Mrs. Theodosia Burr Alston's brilliant one, the beautiful Mrs. Montgomery and the laughing, sparkling Miss Livingston. Each one as she caught my eye sent me a swift little nod or smile or wave of a white hand, betokening friendliness, but among that group of friends I searched in vain for Mademoiselle. I hardly knew whether to be pleased or hurt by her absence. Did it denote an unwillingness to be witness to my disgrace, or an indifference to my fate? I could hardly believe the latter in the face of her words to me in the Bridewell, and on the whole I was glad she was not there.

The time of preparation for the trial had been incredibly short, as I had known trials in England. It was just one week from the day of my arrest that I found myself sitting in the prisoner's box in that crowded room and awaiting that opening question of the trial —"Guilty or not guilty?"

I was startled at my own voice, for I had intended to speak quietly, and my "Not guilty" rang out as I had not expected it to do. It roused me from the apathy into which I had sunk at sight of the crowded court-room, and I determined to follow my own trial keenly. Not one point made by either side should escape me, and if I discovered anything which I thought could in any way be a help to my case I should communicate it to my counsel, who sat conveniently near me.

I confess the opening speech of the prosecuting attorney appalled me and I could see it made a decided impression upon the jurors, twelve sturdy-looking yeomen, who looked sufficiently honest and intelligent, but who, I feared, were not free from the natural prejudice every American feels toward a Briton.

"The state will prove by its witnesses," said the prosecuting attorney, "that a very large sum of the city's money disappeared from the mayor's office during his illness; that its disappearance was discovered just after the prisoner had been left in sole charge of the office for several days with the keys to the money vaults in his possession; that immediately after his occupancy of the mayor's office he was noticed to be very free with American money, whereas up to that time he had only English money in his possession; and finally, that his previous record is a dubious one: he was sent to this country either as a fugitive from justice at home or in the hope of reforming him by a lengthened absence from corrupting associations in his native land."

At this last accusation I must indeed have looked the criminal they charged me with being, for I turned scarlet with shame. But catching Irving's eye, in swift pantomime he expressed his pretended horror at this exposure of my true character, and Miss Livingston, who sat beside him, put on such a preternaturally sober look and shook her head at me so solemnly that I smiled in spite of myself. A smile of which the prosecuting attorney took quick advantage by expressing the "sorrow one must naturally feel at seeing so young a criminal so hardened to all sense of shame."

The judge, I think, had seen Irving's pantomime and the effect it produced upon me, for he spoke sharply to the assembly. If he discovered any further attempts among the spectators at trying to communicate with the prisoner by signs, he would have the court-room cleared at once. Even then Irving could not refrain from bestowing upon me a solemn wink, but I maintained the face of a sphinx and set myself in earnest to the work of listening.

For the prosecuting attorney was calling his first witness, who, he said, would testify to the reasons for my being sent from home. I was curious enough to know who could testify to that. I had told no one but Mademoiselle, and I was quite sure she was not going to betray my confidence, made to her on the way home from Montgomery Place. Nor did I see what bearing on the case my affair with Peggy would have, if she should.

To my amazement it was my old friend Captain Skinner of the *Sea Gull* who was called. He was a most unwilling witness, that was evident, and he sought my face on his entry into the witness box with a glance full of apology. Every word was pulled from him as with a dentist's forceps. I am sure he would have helped my case more, if he had been a more willing witness; he had all the air of having some damaging testimony he wished to conceal.

"Do you know the prisoner?" demanded the attorney.

"Waal, slightly, yer Honor," replied the witness.

"Reserve 'Your Honor' for the Court," said the attorney sharply, and went on: "Where did you first meet the prisoner?"

"Aboard the *Sea Gull,* yer —" He gulped and stopped short. The jury tittered.

"Who was with the prisoner when you met him?"

"Another gentleman, ef I recolleck rightly."

"Was this other gentleman his father?"

"Waal — he might have been."

"Did you not know that he was?"

"Waal — yes — I calkelate I did."

"Did you have any conversation with this young gentleman when you first met him?"

"I reckon I passed the time o' day with him."

"Please do not 'reckon' or 'calculate' in your answers, but tell me exactly what you remember, all you remember, and no more," said the attorney sharply.

"Yaas, sir," said the captain with a droll glance at me that set some of the men in the jury to tittering again. The attorney saw and was irritated, as the manner of his next question betrayed.

"Did you or did you not at any time have any private conversation with the prisoner's father?"

The captain hesitated.

"Well? A little quicker, if you please, Captain Skinner," snapped the attorney.

"I 'm tryin' to recolleck, sir. It kinder seems to me I did," drawled the captain.

"Tell the Court, if you please, the nature of that conversation."

"It was private, sir," responded the captain in his slow drawl, but with a twinkling eye, and this time some of the jury snickered aloud, and some of the spectators guffawed.

"Order!" shouted the officer of the court, and the attorney thundered at the witness:

"Repeat to the Court, as nearly as you can recollect, every word of the conversation between yourself and Lord Marchmont."

"Waal," began the captain imperturbably, "ez near ez I recolleck, Lord Marchmont says—'Ken I hev a word with you in your cabin, Captain Skinner?' An' I sez, 'Bime-by, my lord.' An' when I had a moment's leisure, I says, 'I 'm at your service, my lord,' an' he says, 'Thank you, Cap'n.' An' when we come into my cabin, I says, 'Be seated, my lord,' an' he says, 'Thank you, Cap'n.'"

By this time there was a general titter all over the house, including the jurors. Even the judge on his bench was struggling to repress a smile and Mr. Hamilton was beaming. Only the prosecuting attorney was not smiling—he was furiously angry.

"Confine yourself to a repetition only of the important parts of your conversation with Lord Marchmont," he ordered.

"Yaas, sir; ef I ken jedge what wuz important and what wa' n't," drawled the captain.

"Go on, sir," thundered the attorney. "Did Lord Marchmont have any instructions to give you, or any message or information concerning his son?"

"Yaas, sir."

"What was it?"

"'T was private, sir."

"Your Honor," the attorney, exasperated beyond the limit of patience, appealed to the judge, "will the Court order this witness to tell what he knows?"

"The witness will give the prosecuting attorney freely all the information in his possession or be committed for contempt of court," said His Honor sternly, but the twinkle not quite all out of his eye.

"Very well, yer Honor," said the captain quietly, and for the first time looking troubled. "I will answer them questions to the best of my ability ef the lawyer will ask 'em so 's I can be sure of what he wants to know."

"You say Lord Marchmont made you a communication concerning his son, of a private nature. Will you give the Court the substance of that communication in as nearly the exact words of his lordship as you can recollect?" said the attorney, taking up his examination once more.

"His lordship said," began the captain with an air of determination, and then stopped.

"Yes?" said the attorney encouragingly.

"His lordship said," he began again desperately, "he calkelated it was best for his son to spend a couple o' years in America."

"Did his lordship give his reasons?"

"I think he said 't was on account of a little affair Sir Li'nel hed been engaged in," reluctantly, and greatly embarrassed.

"Do you mean a duel?"

"He did not tell me what kind o' affair."

"Had you any reason to believe it was a disgraceful affair of any kind?"

"I hed no means o' knowin' anythin' about it."

"Except what his lordship said?"

"Except what his lordship said."

"Can you give me Lord Marchmont's exact words?"

Here the good captain hesitated again, and at last he spoke with difficulty, each word apparently costing him great pain:

"As near as I can recolleck, these was his words —'My son hes become involved in an affair which has given great consarn to his friends. It is our hope that residin' abroad for a year or two will cure him and be a benefit to him in every way.'"

The prosecuting attorney glanced triumphantly at the jury, every man of whom assumed an air of preternatural wisdom. Then he went on with his examination:

"Was there anything further of importance in your interview with Lord Marchmont?"

"Nothin' of importance."

"There was something, however?"

"Yaas, sir, a little somethin'."

"What was it?"

"He give me two letters for his son."

"From himself?"

"One wuz from himself."

"Do you know from whom the other letter was?"

"No, sir."

"Did you deliver these letters immediately?"

"No, sir."

"When did you deliver them?"

"After we left Lee Havver."

"Why did you wait so long?"

"Those wuz my instructions."

"Did the letters seem to produce any effect on the young man?"

"I thought they did, sir."

"What effect?"

"They seemed to make him seasick; he kep' his cabin for several days."

A peal of laughter greeted this last reply, quickly quieted by the officer. I felt myself turn scarlet, but under cover of the slight confusion, Mr. Hamilton turned to me and spoke quickly:

"Is there anything in this 'affair,' Sir Lionel?"

"There was something, but it is all over," I answered, turning a deeper red under his keen eyes.

"Was it a love affair?"

"I thought so at the time. I know now it could not be called by so dignified a name."

"Are you willing that I should so explain it to the Court?"

"Not unless it is absolutely necessary, sir."

"It was your father's reason for sending you abroad?"

"Yes, sir. That and to keep me out of the army for a year or two longer."

The questions and answers had been hurried, for the prosecuting attorney was just finishing with his witness. I had not heard his last question, but I caught the end of Captain Skinner's reply, which produced another peal of laughter and drenched me with another wave of scarlet.

"I wa' n't sure but he was lovesick," drawled the captain.

"Gentlemen of the Jury," said the attorney, "you have heard the testimony of this honest sea captain, proving beyond a doubt that the prisoner was sent abroad either because he had already committed a crime or had acquired vicious habits which his father hoped to reform."

And then, turning blandly to Mr. Hamilton:

"Does my learned opponent desire to examine the witness further?"

Mr. Hamilton was on his feet in a moment.

"I would not like to risk spoiling the good impression your witness's testimony has produced for my client; I will waive my privilege, Mr. Attorney. Only, permit me to thank Captain Skinner for his valuable evidence in behalf of a young man sent away from home because he was too young, or so his father thought, to enter the army on the eve of war. No doubt, as Captain Skinner intimates, he may have left a sweetheart behind him, as what young man of his age and attractions would not? And, no doubt, that would be sufficient to account for any idiosyncrasies of manner on his outward voyage." He bowed with consummate grace to the captain, the jury and the Court and sat down.

Now I had been terribly irritated with my friend, Captain Skinner, all the way through his testimony, thinking that he was muddling my affairs incredibly and no doubt doing me great damage. I still think he would have done me much hurt in the eyes of the jury but for the clever way in which Mr. Hamilton turned his evidence to our account. I could see the jury look first puzzled, and then take on an air of self-satisfaction, as if they too had been clever enough to discover that the evidence intended to injure my case had helped it.

There were one or two unimportant witnesses called next; one, a young man who had been present at the first dinner at the Grange and heard Mr. La Force state his reasons for asking me to take charge of the office in his absence — that I might render in this way, the service to Mr. Livingston that I expressed myself as greatly desirous of rendering him, without any peril to myself; the other, a young man who had heard me ask Mr. La Force how the office was doing, at my second dinner at the Grange, and heard him reply that some peculiar complications had arisen within the last few days which he hoped to untangle soon. I recall the names of neither of these young men — they had made no impression upon me at the two dinners — but I remember that the second one said that he had particularly noted the nervousness of my manner, as of one conscious of guilt, when Mr. La Force made this statement! I believe the young fellow was quite sincere in his testimony; that his memory was colored by a reflected light from his present belief in my guilt; which is natural enough, I suppose.

And then Mr. La Force was called.

His pallid face and black-rimmed eyes had always given me more or less of a creepy sensation; now I could with difficulty repress a shudder as I glanced at him, for the pallor of his face had increased to ghastliness, and dark circles around his eyes gave him an uncanny air that appalled me. I thought he must look to everyone as he looked to me, and that his very appearance would carry weight with the jury against his testimony. But I could not see that it did. Indeed, I must confess the villain — for so I now regarded him — carried a smooth tongue. He told a straightforward story so simply and glibly, that I could perceive it had a most convincing effect upon the jury. I think I should have been convinced myself, had I been one of the jurors. The prosecuting attorney was not questioning him; he had asked him to tell the Court all that he knew about this affair, and I could see that with every word

Mr. La Force uttered, the attorney's glances, directed to the jury, were growing more and more triumphant.

"I met Sir Lionel at a dinner at Mr. Hamilton's," said Mr. La Force, after he had been duly sworn and the attorney had given him free rein. "I was greatly attracted to him, and when I heard him, with the generous ardor that seemed natural to him, insist upon being allowed to aid in nursing Mr. Livingston, I wanted to dissuade him — as General Hamilton and Senator Morris were endeavoring to do — from exposing himself to such peril. Then it occurred to me that if I could convince him that he would be rendering Mayor Livingston as great a service by sitting for two days in his office, I would at least be postponing his peril until he had time to recover from the effects of his sea-voyage, and be in a better condition to withstand the assaults of fever. It was imperative that I should leave the city for two days, but I had other friends whom I could trust implicitly who would gladly have served me, and still more gladly have served Mayor Livingston.

"But I believed I could trust Sir Lionel. His face and his manner are such as to win confidence from a stranger, and I foolishly thought his rank was sufficient guaranty of his integrity. He consented, after some persuasion, and when he came to the office I showed him, among other things, the money vaults, and gave him the keys in case there should be any unforeseen necessity for paying out money — possibly an order from Mayor Livingston. I am bound to say the prisoner made some slight demur at having the secrets of the money vaults disclosed to him, saying he was quite sure there could be no need of money in two days. At the time I liked his demurral as another evidence of his trustworthiness; it has seemed to me since rather as a token of duplicity. I gave him, also, an exact list of the amount of money in the vaults, in gold, silver and notes, which, even had I doubted his honesty, I would have regarded as a sufficient check on him.

"After my return to the office I had no occasion, for a day or two, to go to the money vaults. They seemed undisturbed, and for some days, perhaps a week or more, such money as I needed was taken from the top layers, and I did not suspect anything wrong. It must have been fully two weeks after my return that I discovered that it was only the two upper layers that were intact. All below was mere waste paper, old books, and ledgers, neatly covered, as was each layer of money, by a sheet of brown paper.

"I was utterly horrified and, for a while, dazed. I did not, at first, think of Sir Lionel as the possible culprit. I could think of no one who could have accomplished the crime but our janitor, Pompey, formerly one of Mayor Livingston's slaves, only lately set free, and devoted to the mayor, body and soul. He had always shown himself honest as the day and faithful in all his duties. I hated to suspect him, but I could think of no one else who could have the same opportunities.

"On the very day that I made the discovery of the theft I noticed a piece of gold in Pompey's possession. It was very remarkable for Pompey to be possessing gold. I had never known him to have much but coppers before, and I asked him how he came to have a five dollar gold piece. 'Marse Li'nel gabe it to me, sir,' was his reply, and for the first time a suspicion of Sir Lionel flashed into my mind. I asked Pompey to let me look at the piece of gold, and, sure enough, it bore the mark that I had myself placed on every gold piece as I deposited it in the drawer. After that, I could hardly help believing Sir Lionel guilty, yet I was very unwilling to do so.

"Then, day by day, little items of information came to me, each one strengthening my conviction of his guilt. I learned that Sir Lionel had been sent away from home by his father because of some scrape he had been in at home. I learned that he was much addicted to cards and betting; that, though his allowance was liberal, it was his habit to be always, or often at least, hard up; that finally he had made a very heavy bet with one of the young gentlemen who go to Cockloft Hall on the very night before taking possession of the mayor's office, and had lost. When I summed up all these items as to the character and habits of Sir Lionel, I could arrive at but one conclusion.

"Yet when I had arrived at that conclusion I was still bewildered as to what steps I ought to take. Mayor Livingston, although on the high road to recovery, was still too ill to come to the office. I did not believe I ought to run the risk of throwing him into a possibly fatal relapse, by conveying to him the startling intelligence of the robbery. Still less did I believe that I ought to inform anyone else until I could inform Mayor Livingston. Whoever should prove to be the guilty one, the disgrace and the burden of restitution must fall on him. And I was the more willing to wait until the mayor should be able to come to the office and learn there the dreadful tidings, because the man I suspected was himself ill of the fever, at death's door, report said. There was no chance of his escape.

"Mr. Livingston was as unwilling as I had been to think Sir Lionel guilty, though I believe, when I had set all the facts before him, he was convinced, but unwilling to say so. He was leaving the very next morning for Clermont and Sir Lionel was going with him. He begged me to say nothing of my suspicions. He would lay the matter before the proper authorities in a letter from Clermont and every assistance should be given the authorities in discovering the thief, but he himself would make no suggestions as to whom it might be and he begged me not to do so.

"Mayor Livingston was completely crushed by the tidings, as was natural, for it meant not only disgrace, but also financial ruin. 'Every shilling of the amount taken shall be returned to the city if it takes every shilling I possess,' he said grimly, and I was so deeply touched at his utterance and the manner of it that I determined, from that moment, that I would bring the criminal to justice and make him restore his booty, whether Mayor Livingston approved or not.

"In the three weeks that the Mayor and Sir Lionel have been in Clermont, I have collected much testimony that made the matter clear to my mind. A chance remark of Captain Skinner's, when I happened, one night, to be taking dinner with him, at the Tontine Coffee House, convinced me that he could tell something of importance concerning the reasons for

Sir Lionel's voyage to America. Pompey also had an interesting bit of information to give me, and altogether I decided that, for Mayor Livingston's sake, my only right course was, when opportunity should offer, to secure Sir Lionel's arrest. The opportunity came sooner than I expected. When I saw Sir Lionel standing on the outskirts of the crowd at the laying of the corner-stone, and evidently endeavoring to keep himself concealed — as one might do who was conscious of guilt — I left the platform where I was sitting, hastened to the Bridewell and secured a constable and a warrant for his arrest."

"That is all you have to say?" asked the attorney, as Mr. La Force had evidently finished his story.

"Yes, sir, I believe that is all," returned Mr. La Force.

"Your Honor," said the attorney, turning to the judge, "I believe no questions of mine could bring out more forcibly the truth of this simple story than the straightforward way in which Mr. La Force has told it. If it has not carried conviction to the mind of every juryman hearing it then they are not the intelligent body of men I take them to be. I leave my witness with confidence in the hands of my honorable opponent."

To my consternation, Mr. Hamilton declined to cross-examine, at present, he said, but he begged permission of the prosecuting attorney to be allowed to do so after his own witnesses had been called, and therefore asked that Mr. La Force should still be retained in custody.

"It is an unusual request, but if His Honor allows it, I will make no objection," said the attorney stiffly.

The judge allowed it, and Mr. La Force was once more remanded to custody, and I thought I discovered a swift flash of some emotion, either of fear or resentment, in those black-rimmed eyes when Mr. Hamilton's request was preferred.

I have said that I heard Mr. Hamilton decline to cross-examine with consternation. He had heard my version of Mr. La Force's story, and it seemed to me there were many points where he could have brought out an entirely different impression from the one evidently left upon the minds of the jury.

Could it be possible Mr. La Force's recital had convinced Mr. Hamilton himself? He had sat with downcast eyes and an inscrutable countenance through the telling of it except that, occasionally, he had flashed a swift, keen glance at Mr. La Force, as if he would pierce that white mask and read in the speaker's very soul the truth or falsity of his tale.

I was the more dismayed by the fear that Mr. Hamilton himself was beginning to believe in my guilt, because Mr. La Force's story had well-nigh convinced me, so cleverly, with such an air of conviction, it had been told. Of course it was impossible that I could believe in my own guilt, but I was well-nigh convinced that Mr. La Force believed in it. Heretofore I had thought him animated by malignity toward me — possibly on Miss Desloge's account — I had even, at intervals, wondered if he himself could be the criminal, though I never allowed myself to dwell on that — but now I began to believe, with Mr. Burr and Mr. Livingston, that Mr. La Force was honest and actuated entirely by zeal for and sympathy with his employer.

The next witness called was the black janitor, Pompey. Now Pompey had been most attentive to me in my two days' incarceration in the Mayor's office. I had liked his honest, grinning black face well, and I had thought he liked me. I was sorry to see that he, too, believed in my guilt and was to testify against me.

"Look at the prisoner. Have you ever seen him?" was the attorney's first question to Pompey.

"Yaas, Marsah," replied Pompey, with one scared glance at me, the whites of his eyes rolling wildly.

"Where?"

"In Marse Livingston's offus."

"How many times did you see him there?"

"Mebbe twenty, mebbe ten; I dunno fo' shoah, Marsah."

"What were the occasions of your seeing him?"

"Sah?" queried the bewildered and alarmed Pompey.

"I mean, were you waiting on the prisoner when you saw him, and what were you doing?"

"Oh, yaas, sah," Pompey was relieved. "Sometimes I done tek him water, sometimes I done tek him lemon squash, sometimes one t'ing, sometimes anudder."

"When you took him these things, what was he doing as a rule?"

"Mos' genelly readin', sah."

"Always?"

"'Ceptin' onct, I bleeve."

"What was he doing that once?"

"He was comin' out ob de nex' room."

"What was the next room?"

"De room whar Marse Livingston keep de money."

"How do you know Mayor Livingston keeps the money there?"

"I done seed it, sah."

"Did he ever send you there to get money by yourself?"

"Fo' de Lawd, no!" exclaimed Pompey, frightened out of his manners by the suggestion.

"How did the prisoner look when you saw him coming out of the next room?"

"He look kind o' sceered, sah."

"In what way did he look scared?"

"He all red an' flustery, sah."

"What did he say to you?"

"He say, 'What yoh doin' hyar, Pompey?'"

"Did he say anything else?"

"Yes, sah, he say, 'When I need yo', I 'll ring for yo'. Yoh doan need come in hyar ebery few minutes.'"

"Did you enter the office after that except when the prisoner rang?"

"No, sah."

"Did he ring often?"

"No, sah."

This was a telling speech of Pompey's, and I could see its effect on the jury. I racked my brains to recall whether I had ever said any such thing to him. I thought it possible I had, for he rather pestered me with attentions. But as to his seeing me come from the money room, looking "red and flustered," I believed that to be a pure invention. I could not remember going into that "next room" at all. And then it flashed into my mind that here was the thief! As Mr. La Force had said, he had plenty of opportunities and he had cunningly made up that story about surprising me coming from the money room to cover his own tracks. I leaned over and whispered to Mr. Hamilton:

"There is the thief!"

Mr. Hamilton looked at him keenly for a minute and then as keenly at me.

"Did you never go into that next room? or rather did Pompey never meet you coming from it?" he asked.

"I cannot recall ever entering it, except the one time Mr. La Force took me there."

"Perhaps he *is* the thief," said Mr. Hamilton quietly, and set himself again to listening.

"Did the prisoner tip you as he was leaving?" the attorney was asking as I began to listen once more.

"Not jes' as he wuz leavin', mebbe 't wuz a couple o' hours befoah."

"Was Mr. La Force present?"

"No, sah."

"How much did he give you?"

"Five dollahs, sah." Pompey's eyes rolled again. It seemed to have been an extraordinary amount, yet in England I have often given a sovereign to a servant in a house where I had been visiting.

"What did he say when he gave it to you?"

"He say I bin bery p'lite an' 'tentif, sah, an' he t'ank me. He seem like bery nice gen'leman, sah, an' I sorry he 'm in trubble," with a roll of his eyes toward me, as if to beg my pardon for testifying against me.

The spectators laughed good-naturedly. Audience and jury evidently believed in Pompey, to most of whom he had been well known for years.

"Your Honor," said the attorney, "I think I do not need to question this witness further. Honesty and truth are written in every line of his shining black countenance, and I think the enlightened jury will agree with me that his testimony has been most damaging to the prisoner.

"He has made two incontrovertible points. He surprised the prisoner coming from the money room when there was evidently no necessity of his going there, and the prisoner was red and flustered, and reprimanded him sharply for entering the office 'every few minutes' without being summoned. Of course, if he had nefarious designs to accomplish, it was very awkward indeed to have the honest darkey entering at any inauspicious moment. It would appear that Pompey's entrance at that time probably frustrated his design, but that, since afterwards the witness came only when summoned, the prisoner had plenty of opportunity to accomplish it later.

"His second incontrovertible point was the tip, of such size as is never given to a negro in this country, but bestowed, no doubt, with the intention of sealing the negro's lips when questions should be asked. Moreover, it was not given on leaving, the usual time for tips, for the very good reason that Mr. La Force would then have been present, which would, no doubt, have been extremely awkward for the prisoner. No, it was given several hours before Mr. La Force had reached the office. Fortunately, Mr. La Force discovered that it had been given, and still more fortunately, Mr. La Force, with the foresight for which he is noted, had marked the gold pieces in the drawer. The proof is incontrovertible. Will the honorable counsel for the defendant question the witness further?"

Mr. Hamilton was on his feet, with a smiling countenance.

"Your Honor, may I inquire of my distinguished opponent whether this is his last witness?"

"It is, sir. I think my case needs no others," said the attorney confidently.

"Then, Your Honor," said Mr. Hamilton, still smiling, "if I may be allowed the same privilege in the case of this witness as the former one, I should like to examine him after the direct examination of my own witnesses. And as the hour is late, and both my witnesses and myself would be better fitted to go through the ordeal after dinner, may I beg the Court to grant a recess before beginning on my direct examinations?"

The recess was granted. I believe it was not often that anything was denied to Mr. Hamilton's asking, and I think he must have made a very hurried dinner, indeed, for part of that recess of an hour, I heard afterward, he spent with his witnesses, and a good quarter of it, I am sure, he spent with me. He came in, his face beaming, and a sandwich in his hand, at which he nibbled occasionally as he talked. The sandwich, with, perhaps, a glass of wine, was his only dinner, I fancy.

"Well, Sir Lionel, we have them, I believe," he exclaimed as he entered, in a tone whose cheeriness inspired confidence at once. I had been feeling very blue, and part of my blueness had been that I was losing confidence, a little, in my counsel's ability. Either he was not so great a lawyer as I had heard, or he had not the conviction of my innocence necessary to success. So far, he had not made a single cross-examination and I had supposed that was where his power lay.

"Have them!" I exclaimed in return. "I was beginning to feel they had us. In fact, unless you can prove Pompey is the thief, I do not see but I am bound to be convicted. Mr. La Force and Pompey between them have nearly convinced me of my own guilt."

Mr. Hamilton laughed.

"They were pretty strong witnesses, were n't they?" he asked gleefully. "But we have two who will make their evidence look as weak as water. The second has but just arrived with the messenger I sent after him, and I have been on pins and needles for fear he would not come in time. I would not have the case postponed because I did not want to keep you in the Bridewell any longer, but if he had not arrived when he did, I should have had to resort to some means to drag it out until he did come. That is one reason I asked for the recess and deferred my cross-examinations. He has just reported to me and everything is all right."

"Have you only two witnesses?" I asked.

"Only two, but each one is an army; they are all I need."

"Would you mind telling me who they are?"

"I would rather not, Sir Lionel," he returned quite gravely. "I believe it is better that you should not know. Only trust me — I promise you you shall be a free man before bed-time to-night."

His voice had so kind and true a ring, I could not but trust him, and something in its gentle, friendly tones, and the kindly glance of his eye brought my father so vividly before me that I felt the quick tears springing. Surely it was wonderful that I should have found such a friend in a strange land. I think Mr. Hamilton saw that I was touched, and he spoke briskly, with an entire change of manner.

"And now, how about Pompey? So you think he's the thief?"

"Do not you, sir?"

"Well, I'm not sure, of course, but I don't like to think so. I've known Pompey for thirty years and never known him dishonest. But there's one thing I want to ask you. Can't you possibly remember going, just once, into that room where the money was kept, and meeting Pompey as you came out?"

Again I racked my memory for a minute, and then it flashed upon me.

"I do, sir, I do!" I cried excitedly.

Mr. Hamilton smiled quietly.

"Well, tell me about it."

"It was the first day, sir, in the afternoon. It was very hot and I was tired of reading. Mr. La Force had shown me a drawer where I could find stationery, if I should feel like beguiling the time with writing letters, and I decided that I would write home and stop at the post office on my way to my hotel and mail the letter. I opened the drawer and there, on top of the writing materials, lay a bunch of keys that I recognized as the keys to the money vaults Mr. La Force had shown me. He had also pointed out the place they were kept, which was in a drawer in the next room. I took up the keys immediately and carried them into the other room and deposited them in their proper place, and I was quite indignant with Mr. La Force for having been so careless, for, if I had not happened to discover them, some thief might easily have found them and I would have been held responsible."

"Do you remember meeting Pompey as you came back?" Mr. Hamilton asked, smiling his satisfaction that I had recalled the incident.

"Yes, I believe I do. Very likely I did look 'red and flustered.' I was hot enough to look red — we never have such heat in England — and I was still fuming at Mr. La Force and no doubt spoke sharply to Pompey."

Mr. Hamilton rubbed his hands gleefully together — it was a characteristic action with him when he was pleased.

"Everything fits in exactly. Every word you utter is a link in the chain that I believe now to be complete. Sir Lionel, I would like to wager you that the jury will not be out ten minutes until they come back with a verdict of 'Not Guilty.'"

"I 'd like to take you up," I answered; "I would be willing to lose a tidy sum on that. But I suppose, if the prosecuting attorney should hear that I was betting on my own conviction, he would consider me an abandoned character, indeed, and hold me up for the reprobation of the Court and a warning to all youthful Americans."

"No doubt of it, sir, no doubt of it!" exclaimed Hamilton chuckling, "and your counsel would be sent to limbo with you, where he has often been sent before. By the way, Sir Lionel, how do you explain that marked piece of money you gave to Pompey? You are an extravagant rascal, sir, to be giving gold to darkies — a shilling satisfies them as well."

I blushed at his charge of extravagance.

"I did not know, sir," I said meekly. "As to the marked piece, that is another of those strange freaks of circumstantial evidence. Mr. La Force changed some English money for me only the day before. It slipped his memory, I suppose, when he discovered I had given a marked piece to Pompey."

"'Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad,'" murmured Mr. Hamilton. I did not see the application and he seemed so lost in thought, I did not ask him for it. In a moment he looked up again brightly.

"By the way, did you notice the mark on the piece?"

"No, sir, I did not know it was marked."

"Have you any more of those pieces?"

"Yes, sir, several, I think, though I have spent the most of them. I am afraid I am the spendthrift the attorney painted me, though I do not remember being so constantly 'hard up,' as he said — my father is very liberal with me."

"Yes, I'm afraid you are a sad spendthrift," said Mr. Hamilton genially. "But let me see some of those gold pieces, if you have any about you."

I fished in my pockets and found three, two tens and a five. I handed them over to Mr. Hamilton, and he looked all three over carefully; then handed them to me to hunt for the mark; but neither of us could discover anything.

"Let me take these three pieces until after the trial," said Mr. Hamilton; "you are sure you have no more of them?"

I went through my pockets again, but found no more.

"Well, these are enough," he said gleefully, depositing them in a side pocket from which he carefully removed every other coin. "The last link is forged, the chain of evidence is complete. I must be going — it is almost time for court to reopen. Keep a light heart, Sir Lionel, for we are *bound to win.*"

As he was going out, he put his head back in the door and said, in a mock, sepulchral whisper:

"I'd like to make you another wager, Sir Lionel, that we will *have the real criminal in the Bridewell before night.*"

XXII

MADEMOISELLE KNOWS

THERE was no resisting Mr. Hamilton's happy hopefulness; I could not be despondent after he left me, though I could not feel quite so sure as he that I would be out of the Bridewell before night.

One other call I had during the recess — a very brief one. It was from Mayor Livingston. He came in hurriedly and, almost shamefacedly, he took my hand and wrung it.

"I cannot but feel, Sir Lionel, that I have brought you into all this trouble, and I have come to ask you to forgive me and to tell you that I am as sure of your innocence as of my own. Your case seemed to go badly this morning — you are entangled in a most unfortunate web of circumstances — but I have great faith in Hamilton's ability to unravel the knot. He is a great man and a great lawyer. But I want you to know that, whatever the verdict, I believe in you, and if it should go against you I will move heaven and earth for a pardon. Governor Clinton is a life-long friend and he *shall* grant it. Can you forgive me?"

His voice broke on the last words and I was so moved at the sight of his distress that I could only wring his hand, for a moment, silently. Then I recovered my self-control and assured him I held him in no jot or tittle responsible. Moreover, I assured him I expected an acquittal confidently, and that I did not feel that I was the one who needed sympathy, but he, who, however the verdict went, was bound to lose place, position and fortune.

"But neither honor nor friends, sir," I added. "This city will always honor your name as one of its greatest, best, and most dearly loved — and your friends are legion."

My little speech seemed to move him still more deeply. He crushed my hand in response and went out silently, and I felt, at that moment — as Mr. La Force had said he had felt — that I would leave no stone unturned to discover the true criminal and compel him to confession and restitution.

The court-room was, if possible, more crowded in the afternoon, and there was an eager air of expectancy among the spectators, since everyone knew that Mr. Hamilton was to be depended on for a brilliant *coup* of one kind or another, and that he was now to take charge of the trial. I glanced quickly toward that part of the room where my friends had been seated in the morning. Yes, they were all there, but again I looked in vain for Mademoiselle. This time I experienced a keen pang of disappointment. Mr. Hamilton had so thoroughly imbued me with his confidence in my acquittal that I wanted her to be present. Was she indifferent? Could she be ill?

My questions were answered before I had hardly finished asking them. Mr. Hamilton was on his feet making his brief opening speech.

"I have subpœnaed but two witnesses," he said, "and as it is an almost impossible feat in law to prove a man innocent, I have confined my efforts to a rebuttal of the evidence that attempted to prove my client guilty. And after the examination of my two witnesses — and cross-examination if my honorable friend so desires," with a courtly bow to the prosecuting attorney, "I hold to the privilege you have granted me of cross-examining the witnesses for the State."

He turned to the sheriff and the name that was called struck consternation to my heart. Almost I refused to believe my senses, as I heard it, and as I saw a graceful figure, closely veiled in gray, slowly mount to the witness box. My heart pounded so furiously and the blood rushed so madly to my brain and back again, turning me deaf and blind for the moment, that I lost some of the preliminaries. When I was able to look and listen the witness had been duly sworn and the gray veil was lifted. Mr. Hamilton was asking questions in a fashion so courteous and gentle that the witness was evidently rapidly regaining her composure. Her answers, which at first were scarcely audible, now came in a voice, still low-pitched, but perfectly clear and calm.

Mr. Hamilton's first questions had been as to her name, nationality and residence. I had not been able to hear the answers to these, but presently I heard a question to which I listened intently.

"How long have you known Sir Lionel?" was Mr. Hamilton's question.

I wondered that she hesitated in her answer, but presently it came, low and clear:

"I met him on board the *Sea Gull,* nearly three months ago."

"Did you observe anything in his manner which would have led you to believe him a fugitive from justice or a hardened reprobate sent from home to reform?"

"Nothing, sir."

"What was his ordinary manner?"

"I thought him, at first, a little sad, but that I supposed was natural on leaving home and friends. Later he seemed to recover his cheerfulness."

"Have you seen much of him since your arrival in America?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where?"

"I saw him first at the Grange, then at Liberty Hall, and later, I have been spending two or three weeks at Clermont, Miss Livingston's country-seat, where Sir Lionel also was staying."

"At any time have you observed anything in his manner that would indicate he was suffering from remorse, or pricks of conscience?"

"No, sir."

"I understand that during his illness you assisted in the care of him — is that true?"

"Yes, sir," barely articulated.

I was indignant. Why was it necessary to subject Mademoiselle Desloge to questions that could not but be most trying.

But Mr. Hamilton went on calmly, without appearing to notice her embarrassment.

"Was he, during his illness, in delirium?"

"Yes, sir, much of the time."

"In his delirium did he rave much, or talk frequently?"

"Very frequently."

"Of what did he talk?"

I felt the blood rush to my face. It had not occurred to me before that I had talked in my delirium, and I wondered what Mademoiselle had heard me say. Had I talked of Peggy? Still worse, had I talked of her? But Mademoiselle was answering quite calmly:

"He talked of his father and an Aunt Pamela, of Oxford, and a little of his experiences on ship-board. Also, at times, he talked of 'the Lads of Kilkenny.'"

"He never referred to any events that may have occurred in the mayor's office?"

"Not a word, sir."

"Did he ever mention money in his ravings?"

"I never heard him."

"Did he ever use any words or expressions not fit for a lady's ears?"

"Not one, sir!" indignantly.

"Do you know Mr. La Force, Mr. Livingston's private secretary?"

"Yes, sir."

And now I thought the witness began to falter a little. I was watching her keenly — though she never once turned her eyes my way — and I saw her color begin to come and go. It pained me to see it, for I thought it sure evidence that she cared for La Force. She could talk calmly enough of me.

"How long have you known him?"

Here she hesitated again, and when her answer came, it astounded me:

"I met him first about three years ago."

I had supposed that Miss Desloge had met him for the first time at the dinner at the Grange, where I had first met him.

Could it be possible he was an old friend, perhaps — an old lover? Could it even be possible that Mademoiselle had taken a position in America for his sake? It was all painfully bewildering to me, but I listened the more keenly for the next question and answer.

"Did the acquaintance amount to — friendship?"

"I think it might have been so called, at first."

"Was this — friendship — broken off before he came to America?"

"Yes, sir."

"Has Mr. La Force tried to renew it since your arrival here?"

"Yes, sir."

"Has he been at all confidential with you, since you have met him again?"

"Somewhat so, sir."

Every answer evidently cost her a tremendous effort. At times, she turned so pale I thought she would faint; at others, her cheeks were deep-dyed with the hue of shame. My heart ached for her. I longed to put a stop to this torture to which Mr. Hamilton was subjecting her, and for what purpose I could not see. Yet I could see he was endeavoring to fashion his questions so as to give her as little embarrassment as possible. But, carefully as he fashioned them, it was perfectly evident to me, and I supposed to the jury, that Mr. La Force had been at one time, in France, in love with Mademoiselle Desloge, if not betrothed to her; that something had occurred to break off the affair; that he had renewed his suit in America — how distasteful it must be to Mademoiselle to be obliged to reveal all this! I was ready for her sake to rise up in my prisoner's box and beg Mr. Hamilton to let me go back to the Bridewell, rather than so put her to shame before this crowded house. And how had Mr. Hamilton got hold of these facts? What a mean, spying, tyrannical thing the law was! First it ferrets out all the innermost secrets of one's private life and then compels the poor victim to confess to them before a curious, scandal-scenting vampire of a public.

I knew there was no escape from a subpœna — poor Mademoiselle! How did she get into the toils of this ill-fated case!

Mr. Hamilton was going on relentlessly:

"Did he ever say to you that he had lately come into possession of a large sum of money?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he say by what means?"

"He gave me to understand that it was an inheritance from an uncle in France."

"Did he give you his uncle's name?"

"Yes, sir."

"Were you acquainted with the uncle in France?"

"Yes, sir."

"Had you seen him within a short time of your leaving France?"

"Yes, sir, within a week."

"Was he in health at that time?"

"He seemed to be in perfect health."

"Had other ships arrived in New York since you landed, by which Mr. La Force could have received the tidings of his uncle's death and his inheritance, before he informed you of it?"

"I think two had arrived."

"Had this uncle any children?"

"No, sir."

"When did Mr. La Force inform you of the death of his uncle and his inheritance?"

"About five weeks ago."

"Was that during Sir Lionel's illness?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did you believe him when he told you of it?"

"I did, at first."

"Did you come to have any doubts of it later?"

"Yes, sir."

"Why?"

"I first began to doubt, because it seemed strange to me that his uncle should have left him so large an amount, since he had another favorite nephew who was always regarded as his heir. Later I received a letter from a friend in Paris, who would have been almost certain to have spoken of the death, and there was no mention of it."

"You say 'so large an amount.' Did Mr. La Force ever tell you the amount of this inheritance?"

"Not exactly, but he spoke of it as many thousands of pounds. He said he was now a rich man."

"Did he say what he intended to do with it?"

"He intended to buy a large estate in the interior — near Otsego Lake, I think he said."

"He intended to leave New York City, then?"

"Yes, sir."

"How soon did he expect to leave?"

"He was anxious to leave immediately."

"You are sure of that?"

"Very sure!" emphatically.

Mr. Hamilton glanced pleasantly at the jury, as much as to say — Take note of that, Gentlemen! — and then went on.

"Have you seen Mr. La Force since coming to New York for the laying of the corner-stone of City Hall?"

"Yes, twice."

"I understood you to say that five weeks ago, when he first spoke to you of this inheritance, he was then expecting to leave the city immediately. Is that so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know why he did not leave immediately?"

"I think I do, sir." She colored painfully and could not lift her eyes. I looked away, for I could not bear to see her suffering, and my glance fell on the hushed throng, every member of it breathless and every eye fixed on the witness. No, not all! Miss Livingston's eyes were down and her face was almost as scarlet as Mademoiselle's own and so was Mrs. Montgomery's and Mrs. Hamilton's. Not far from them sat Mayor Livingston, his head bowed, one hand shading his eyes, the picture of distress. I knew it had come to him, as it must have come to everyone in that audience, that Mr. Hamilton was slowly proving, not my innocence but Mr. La Force's guilt. He had been a trusted and confidential servant and Mr. Livingston could not but suffer in the revelation.

Mr. Hamilton seemed to know that he was treading on delicate ground, and forbore to press further the question of La Force's not leaving the city when he first intended.

"Has he spoken to you of his immediate departure since your return to New York?" was his next question.

"Yes, sir."

"Do you know when he intends to leave?"

"As soon as this trial is over."

"Has he ever spoken to you of Sir Lionel?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he seem friendly or otherwise?"

"He seemed to me, covertly, an enemy."

"Did he tell you of his suspicions concerning Sir Lionel before you left New York for Clermont?"

"He told me that there was serious trouble at the office and that he feared it was the result of Sir Lionel's two days' stay there."

"Did he not tell you anything more definite?"

"I asked him the nature of the trouble and he said it would all be out soon and I would know about it."

"Was this before he had told Mayor Livingston of the robbery?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did he say anything else to prejudice you against Sir Lionel?"

"He insinuated many things: that he was hearing constant reports of his profligacy both at home and since his arrival in America."

"Did his insinuations and suspicions affect your opinion of Sir Lionel?"

"No, sir!" My heart gave a leap, for there was a ring of pride in her voice that I had not heard before.

"Did you understand the purpose of his insinuations?"

"I thought I did," very faintly.

"Did you hear of this robbery from any other source before coming back to New York?"

"Yes, sir, Mayor Livingston told me of it."

"Did he tell anyone else?"

"I don't know. I think not, sir." Again a heightened color and again my heart throbbed painfully. It was true, then, that the mayor was infatuated with Mademoiselle; and it seemed to me that here was a man, whose attractions it would be hard for any woman to resist.

"Did Mayor Livingston have any purpose in telling you of the robbery?"

"He wished me to assist him in persuading Sir Lionel not to come to New York with us to the laying of the corner-stone," she answered, and my spirits rose at once.

"Why did he not wish Sir Lionel to come?"

"He believed that he was innocent of this crime, but from what Mr. La Force had told him he feared that he would be arrested and have to submit to the indignity of a trial."

"Why did he not tell Sir Lionel his reasons for wishing him to stay away from New York?"

"He was under promise to Mr. La Force to say nothing to him about it. Also, I think, though he believed him innocent, he was not quite sure of it; and he was not sure but that he was the profligate and scapegrace Mr. La Force had told him he was."

"Then you, also, were under bond to say nothing to Sir Lionel of the robbery?"

"Yes, sir."

The witness was evidently growing very weary. Her pallor was steadily increasing. I began to fear she would not hold out; and though every word had been intensely interesting — thrilling — to me, I began to long for the end. Mr. Hamilton evidently noted her weariness, also.

"Your Honor," he said, "I believe this witness has told us more than enough to prove the point I wish to make later. Unless my distinguished opponent desires to cross-examine, I will excuse her."

Now I had heard much of the district-attorney's methods in cross-examination — that they were in direct contrast to Mr. Hamilton's. That, in fact, he bullied and terrified the witness, and did not hesitate to probe his most secret and intimate affairs, often when they did not bear, even remotely, on the testimony. In a flash I pictured him compelling Miss Desloge to reveal all the details of her acquaintance with Mr. La Force; perhaps even the details of her acquaintance with me. My heart stood still as the district-attorney rose to his feet.

"Your Honor," he said slowly — he was evidently bewildered by this new testimony —"I pray you to grant me the same privilege you have granted my distinguished opponent. Perhaps, after I have heard the testimony of his other witnesses and his cross-examination of mine, I may then wish to cross-examine; for the present I waive my privilege."

I breathed freely again. Miss Desloge was leaving the witness-box, but just before she dropped the gray veil, her eyes met mine, and it seemed to me they said — It was for your sake I endured this ordeal. I know not whether my eyes expressed the gratitude I felt, or whether she had time to read them if they did, for her veil was dropped instantly and she moved swiftly from the room, accompanied to the door by Mr. Hamilton, and there, apparently, put into the hands of some friend whom I could not see.

Mr. Hamilton's second witness was a slight young fellow in the uniform of a naval cadet. I had never seen him before, but I was destined to know him well and experience with him some thrilling adventures in the next few weeks, and to hear of him often in the future with a feeling of pride, at the mention of his name, that I had once known so intimately the distinguished man of letters.

He gave his name as Fenimore Cooper, and his residence as Cooperstown on Otsego Lake, and stated that he had just returned from a visit to his home on leave of absence. Then, question by question, Mr. Hamilton drew from him that on his outward trip, a day's journey from New York, he fell in with a friendly party of Hurons on their way to Otsego Lake, and traveled with them; that, as he was entering their camp, he met a white man just leaving it by the road leading to New York, by which he himself had come — this impressed him as unusual, and he would have stopped to exchange greetings, as was the custom with travelers in the wilderness, but the man seemed in great haste and galloped swiftly by him, merely lifting his hat, as he passed; that the Hurons traveled slowly, since they were afoot, but that he remained with them as long as they were passing through the Shawangunk Mountains and the forests lying between them and the Susquehanna, since these districts were still infested by wandering bodies of Indians from unfriendly tribes; that, in the two or three days he had remained with them, he had learned that a wagon drawn by two strong horses which had aroused his curiosity, since Hurons were not likely to own such valuable property, had been left by the white man he had met leaving the camp; that the wagon seemed to be filled with the light impedimenta of the Indians, but that once, in crossing a swollen stream, it tipped and its contents were doused in the water; that among the contents was a small box or chest which the chief ordered the young men to rescue first; that it seemed heavy and he went to their assistance and discovered that it was very heavy indeed; that one of the braves told him it had been brought by the white man in the wagon with instructions to the Hurons to take it with them to their camp on Lake Otsego and keep it there until he should call for it, which would probably be in two or three weeks; and that he had also said the chest contained valuable papers; that when the witness heard this he suggested to the chief that he should open the chest and take out the papers and dry them, as, otherwise, they would probably mildew and be destroyed; but that the chief refused, saying his instructions were on no account to open the box; and, finally, that he remembered the day of the month very well, as it was the day on which his leave began, the evening of the 25th of August.

Mr. Cooper went on to say that he had almost forgotten the incident until, on his arrival in the city, the day before, he had heard of the robbery and the trial, and that after pondering the matter he had sent word to Mr. Hamilton that he thought he might have some information that bore on the case; that Mr. Hamilton had sent for him during the noon recess, and, after hearing his story, had at once subpœnaed him.

The cross-examination was very brief and every word of it told against the cross-examiner's case. Mr. Hamilton, in the direct examination, had asked:

"Would you know this white man if you should meet him again?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does the prisoner look like him?"

"Not at all."

It was this point the prosecuting attorney tried to weaken.

"If you passed this man at a rapid gallop, how could you expect to know him after an interval of six weeks?" he asked with a sarcastic smile.

"Because, sir," answered Cooper slowly, "there were two striking peculiarities in his appearance. One was that he had very unusual eyes, heavily and blackly lashed on the lower rims and disclosing a line of white above the black lashes. The other was that he did not wear his hair tied, but short and curling in his neck after the fashion the French have introduced to the country. I took him for a Frenchman."

Every word of the young fellow's testimony, given with remarkable clearness and alertness, had been listened to breathlessly, but there was a tremendous sensation after his last utterance. The prosecuting attorney dropped him as if he had been a live coal and Mr. Hamilton turned smilingly to the Court.

"Will Your Honor allow this witness to remain in the court-room while I ask for the return of the State's witnesses?" asked Mr. Hamilton.

The request was granted and young Mr. Cooper was given a seat where he could see the witness-box distinctly without himself being in the direct line of vision of the witness. Mr. Hamilton called first for Pompey and his cross-examination was very brief.

"Have you the gold piece with you that Sir Lionel gave you, Pompey?" he asked pleasantly.

"Yes, Marse Hamilton," answered Pompey, grinning in response to Mr. Hamilton's smile.

"You don't mean to say you have n't spent any of it for lollipops or croquecignolles," demanded Mr. Hamilton astonished, or appearing to be.

"No, sah," returned Pompey emphatically. "I gwine keep dat fibe dollars for lucky-piece. I doan neber spect to git anodder."

"Will you let me look at it, Pompey?" still with his pleasant smile.

"Yes, sah," drawing it slowly and reluctantly from the depths of his breeches pocket, and handing it to Mr. Hamilton.

"Now, will you show me the mark Mr. La Force put on it?"

"I neber seed no mark. I done look fer ut, but I cyahnt fine ut."

"Will you let me keep this, Pompey, for a while?"

"Yes, sah, I specs I hab to," said Pompey mournfully. "But you 'll shore gib ut back to me, Marse Hamilton?"

"Oh, surely, Pompey, you will have it back and perhaps something with it."

Pompey brightened at Mr. Hamilton's promise, and left the witness-box, since this was the end of his examination, only looking back longingly once at the pocket where he had seen his beloved gold piece disappear.

"Before calling Mr. La Force for his cross-examination, I should like to give some instructions to the witness, Mr. Cooper, and to the jury," said Mr. Hamilton, and his tones were greatly changed. They were no longer the gentle, winning ones he had used to Pompey and the other witnesses; they were alert and crisp, as if he were eager for the fray he saw before him.

"I will ask Mr. Cooper," he continued, "to observe the witness closely as he enters, and if he does not recognize him as the man he met leaving the camp of the Hurons, to sit perfectly quiet. If he *does* recognize him, will he nod his head *twice*, and raise his right hand to the level of his shoulder; no higher, please, lest it attract the notice of the witness. I will ask the jury to keep their eyes fastened upon Mr. Cooper, as Mr. La Force enters, so that they may know whether or not Mr. Cooper recognizes him."

Not only the eyes of the jury, but of every person in the house, not excepting the judge, the prosecuting attorney, and the prisoner, were fixed upon Mr. Cooper as Mr. La Force entered the room and walked over to the witness-box. I believe Mr. Hamilton, alone, kept his eyes on the witness. He was sure of the result and he knew Mr. La Force's glance would naturally seek his and he did not want to divert it toward Mr. Cooper. Everyone else in the house saw the involuntary start young Cooper could not quite control as his eyes fell on La Force; saw the emphatic nod, repeated; and the swift raising of the right hand to the level of the shoulder. Then my own glance traveled quickly from young Cooper to the jury. They were smiling and nodding at one another — the test seemed to have satisfied them.

"Mr. La Force," said Mr. Hamilton pleasantly, "you said, in your direct examination, that you were called imperatively out of the city for two days, and therefore asked Sir Lionel to take your place in the mayor's office — was that so?"

"Yes, sir."

"Will you tell the jury, if you please, the nature of that imperative call?"

Mr. La Force hesitated, but only for a moment.

"It was the dangerous illness of a very near friend."

"You had heard of the illness before you attended the dinner party at the Grange?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, it was not so dear a friend, then, that anxiety on his account, or hers, prevented you from engaging in social pleasures. Will you give the jury the name of your friend?"

Mr. La Force's pallid face was taking on a tinge of color.

"Mr. Leon Galliard," he said stiffly.

"And his residence, if you please, or the place where you visited him, the name of the town or village," Mr. Hamilton was still speaking pleasantly.

"He did not live in a town. He lived in the country," answered Mr. La Force glibly.

"Ah, I take it his illness was fatal, since you speak of him in the past tense. Am I right?"

"Yes, sir."

"You did not wear mourning for your friend?"

"No, sir; he was not a relation."

"Will you tell the jury in what State he lived since he did not live in a village."

"On Long Island."

"Ah!" Mr. Hamilton flashed a keen glance at the jury, as much as to say — Take note of that! Mr. La Force saw the glance and began to be somewhat discomposed, as the manner of his answers betrayed. Mr. Hamilton went on quietly.

"You were obliged to cross the East River to get to him?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long did it take you to go to him?"

"About a day, sir."

"Ah, then you were quite up toward the other end of Long Island, for I suppose you were on horseback and rode rapidly."

"Yes, sir, quite a long distance up."

"And you must have passed through a number of towns and villages. Can you give me their names?"

"I am not very good at topography, sir, and the villages were not familiar to me. I believe I remember Brooklyn and Greenwich and Stamford."

"Ah! How could you know, since your errand was to the sick-bed of a friend, that it would take you exactly two days? Might not his illness have detained you longer?"

"I knew that I did not dare to take more than two days away from the office, since Mr. Livingston was ill, one clerk was ill and another away."

"But you dared to take those two days?"

"Yes, sir, since I had someone, whom I believed responsible, to take my place."

"Do you think that the mere desire to see a sick, even, perhaps, a dying friend, was sufficient excuse to warrant your leaving an office, where large amounts of the city's money were kept, in the hands of anyone else, particularly a stranger?" Mr. Hamilton's tones were not so pleasant. There was a ring of sternness in them.

"I think now I was wrong to leave it. I thought then that everything was perfectly safe and it was not only my desire to see my friend, but I had some imperative business with him that must be transacted before his death," said Mr. La Force, sullenly.

"Involving money?"

"Yes, sir."

"A large amount?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have heard that you have recently come into the inheritance of a large amount of money. Was it from this friend?"

Mr. La Force's eyes suddenly widened, so that the white line showed all around them. In an instant the startled look passed and he flashed a quick, keen glance around the room—I believe to be sure Mademoiselle was not present—before he answered, "Yes, sir."

"Ah, you are to be congratulated. It is not often that a friend who is not a relative and for whom one does not wear mourning, is so kind. No doubt, then, you will feel like assisting Mr. Livingston in replacing the city's money since it is somewhat due to your dereliction in duty that it was lost?"

Mr. La Force had turned a dark mahogany under the lash of Mr. Hamilton's tongue; but at his last question, he answered briskly:

"Certainly, sir. I shall be glad to do what I can if the thief is not caught, but I believe we have caught him and that he should make restitution, sir."

I could not help admiring the rogue's cleverness, and so, I believe, did Mr. Hamilton. But he went on with his cross-questioning:

"Ah, that reminds me. You said your suspicions were aroused by discovering a marked gold piece in Pompey's possession, given him by Sir Lionel. Will you describe the mark to me?"

At last La Force saw that he was getting into the toils he had so clumsily laid for me. He began to grow restive.

"I can scarcely describe it, sir. It was infinitesimal, a mere scratch."

"But you recognized it when you saw it?"

"Certainly, sir."

"And you marked every piece with exactly the same mark as you put it in the drawer, you say?"

"Yes, sir." He spoke grimly, as if under compulsion.

Mr. Hamilton drew a gold piece from his pocket.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said. "I had all the gold pieces, of American coinage, removed from the prisoner's pockets. This is one of them I hold in my hand, and I will ask Mr. La Force to show me the mark on it."

He handed the piece to Mr. La Force who, I thought, visibly blanched as he took it. He looked at it hard for a moment, then pointed out a mark to Mr. Hamilton.

"Ah, I see, a slight scratch or abrasion above the peak of the A in 'America.' Then the others have the same, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir."

He drew the other two gold pieces I had given him from his pocket, and scrutinized them carefully.

"I cannot find the mark on either of these, Mr. La Force," he said, still pleasantly, "but your eyes are younger than mine, perhaps you can discover it," and he handed the two pieces to him.

Mr. La Force's face had turned a dark and swarthy hue with the blood pumping in great jets from his heart to his temples. I, whose station was near his, watching him keenly, could see fine beads of perspiration starting out on his forehead. I believe he had great difficulty in keeping his hand from trembling as he held it out for the gold pieces, and I do not believe he could see them at all for the rush of blood that blinded his eyes. But he pretended to look at them for a moment and then handed them back to Mr. Hamilton.

"I suppose I must have neglected to mark an occasional piece," he said coolly.

"Ah, but fortunately you marked the one Sir Lionel gave to Pompey, with the scratch above the A?"

"Fortunately, sir," with a slight sneer.

"And fortunately, then, I happen to have that very piece in my pocket and you can point out the mark to me," and he drew from another pocket Pompey's beloved coin.

Mr. La Force started involuntarily — no doubt he had been quite sure that Pompey's gold piece was long since spent — and his face was no longer swarthy but ashen as he extended a shaking hand for it. He hardly made a pretense of looking at it and handed it quickly back.

"I can just barely decipher it. I suppose Pompey has worn it smooth carrying it in his pocket," he said with a tremendous effort at composure which I could not but admire.

"Ah, of course! That had not occurred to me," said Mr. Hamilton, blandly, and the jury smiled.

"Oh, by the way, Mr. La Force," he spoke as if he had just thought of it, "I believe I did not ask you whether you could recall the day of the month on which you made your visit to your friend on Long Island?"

"The 25th of August, I believe," said Mr. La Force, still with forced composure.

"Ah, thank you. Your memory is excellent," returned Mr. Hamilton suavely, and then turning to the judge he dropped his urbanity and was entirely businesslike: .

"Your Honor, I believe I have drawn all out of this witness I expected to, but as I may think of something to ask him later, I would like to have him retained in the court-room during my summing up."

For one moment Mr. La Force flashed the glance of a hunted beast around the court-room — there were hundreds of eager eyes fastened on him, but in not one pair did he read sympathy or help; in every face he read that he was already tried and condemned. With a tremendous effort he pulled himself together and leading the way, an officer following him, he took his stand by an open window overlooking the balcony — there was no vacant seat in the room — and the officer took his stand beside him.

During the first part of the speech that followed, he let his eyes rove over the court-room with a brazen assumption of indifference, as if he had no interest in what Mr. Hamilton was saying, but I think even while his eyes were so carelessly flitting over the assembly, he was thinking hard and fast. During the latter part of Mr. Hamilton's speech, when there could be no doubt in anyone's mind of what he was coming to, La Force's eyes were on the floor, only occasionally lifted in a quick and furtive glance; his hands were tightly clenched; his whole figure was tense as if bracing himself to endure, or drawing himself up, like a panther, for a sudden spring.

"Gentlemen of the Jury," began Mr. Hamilton in his most winning tones, and they could be very winning indeed, "it is for you to consider some of the facts in this case, as they have appeared to me from the statements of the witnesses on both sides. I have too great confidence in your intellectual ability and your sterling integrity to attempt to influence your judgment. I purpose simply to review, for the sake of refreshing your memories, the story of this case as I have gleaned it. If any point I make is wrong, if I seem to be mistaken in any of my statements, I beg the distinguished counsel on the other side to interrupt me and set me right. A few of these statements you will know were not brought out by the witnesses, but they were either told to me by the prisoner or I drew them by inference from Mademoiselle Desloge. I could put both of these young people on the stand to swear to these statements, but in the case of the prisoner it would be an unusual action and hardly seems necessary, and in the case of the young lady I have greatly desired to spare her any further embarrassment and mortification. She came to me and offered herself as a witness simply because she was unwilling to see the innocent suffer — and in her own mind she was absolutely convinced of Sir Lionel's innocence — but she begged me to spare her as far as possible."

Then in clear, brief sentences he told the story of a young man in Paris, of dissolute habits, who, meeting at his uncle's house a young girl still at school in a convent, makes violent love to her, but secretly. The girl, pleased at first, as any maiden would be with her first lover, is at last frightened and repelled when the young man tries to persuade her to a secret marriage. Insane with jealousy and maddened because the uncle, with whom he lives, refuses to furnish him with all the money he demands, he seeks America to retrieve his fortunes and forget, if possible, the young girl who has scorned him. In America, with much cleverness, he rapidly makes his way into favor, and becomes the trusted and confidential secretary of our beloved mayor.

Here, during the mayor's illness, he is tempted beyond his powers of resistance to appropriate to himself the city's money, which is left entirely in his trust. He might have resisted the temptation, but one day he meets at dinner the young lady who had so inflamed his heart in Paris. At the same dinner he meets a gentleman who, with the keenness of jealousy, he discovers is also interested in the young lady. He has always believed that if he had money his suit would not have been so scornfully rejected. In a flash his clever brain suggests a scheme by which he may become the possessor of wealth, win the young lady and at the same time ruin the man whom he believes to be his rival. He does not delay a moment to put his scheme into execution. The fates are with him. The young man is persuaded to lend himself to the plan, believing that he is thus rendering a service to Mr. Livingston, whose nobility of character has already won his profoundest admiration.

When the secretary introduces this young man, the prisoner, to the mayor's office, he contrives a little plan by which he pretends it may be necessary for the prisoner to visit the money vaults in order to pay the claims of two needy old pensioners.

This, simply to make more plausible his insistence in showing the prisoner the money vaults and the rather intricate means of gaining access to them,—which knowledge he intends to use against him in the future. The prisoner objects strenuously to having anything to do with the money but is silenced by this appeal to his charitable instincts. Of course there never were any such pensioners, outside of the secretary's brain. To complete every small detail by which he may be able to throw suspicion on the prisoner, he first shows him a drawer where stationery may be found, and then leaves the keys in the same drawer, hoping for the very thing that happened—that when the prisoner hastens to return the keys to their proper place he may be discovered coming from the money room by Pompey, whom he has instructed to enter the office every few moments with offers of attentions of some kind, without waiting to be summoned by the prisoner. And he has instilled a seed of suspicion in Pompey's mind by suggesting that thus he can keep strict watch on the prisoner. No doubt the prisoner was "red" —the afternoon was hot—and no doubt he was "flustery" for he has himself said that he was indignant with Mr. La Force for having been so careless as to leave the keys where, if he had not discovered them, any thief might have found them and he would have been held responsible.

In the meantime, the two nights that intervened between the dinner where the secretary formed his diabolical plan, and the day when the prisoner took charge of the office, were employed by the secretary in conveying the city's money, in amounts sufficiently small to be carried by himself, from the mayor's office to a place of concealment where he had also conveyed a chest large enough to hold "many thousands of pounds." And early in the morning of that same day on which the prisoner took charge of the office, the 25th of August, before it was hardly light, he himself drove a wagon drawn by "two strong horses," bearing the heavy chest across Paulus' ferry on the earliest boat, and made his way to the camp of the Hurons, the location of which he had previously ascertained.

Now it must be perfectly evident to the jury that much of this last is mere inference. Had Mr. Cooper's story been known earlier, witnesses could no doubt have been secured to prove it all — the man from whom the chest was bought, the man from whom the horses and wagon were bought, and the ferryman over Paulus' ferry; but it will be time enough to secure these witnesses when the *secretary is brought to trial.* As for his acquaintance with the Hurons' camp, he said, at that very dinner where he first met the prisoner, that he had that day been entertaining at the mayor's office a party of Huron Braves, who were old friends of his, passing through the city on their way north.

"That young Mr. Cooper should have so opportunely turned up to add his testimony seemed like an interposition of the fates, or, more truly, of that Providence that I reverently believe guides the affairs of mortals," said Mr. Hamilton solemnly. "There can be no doubt in the mind of anyone that the man he met leaving the camp of the Hurons in the Shawangunk Hills on the evening of the 25th of August was the man who said he left for Long Island in the morning of the 25th of August; who was sending his property to Lake Otsego, where he had told Miss Desloge he intended to buy an estate. If there had been any doubt in the mind of anyone, even after Mr. Cooper's accurate description of the secretary, there could have been none after his dramatic recognition of him as he entered the court-room. I did not myself see that recognition — I purposely avoided looking at Mr. Cooper — but I saw it vividly reflected in the faces of the jurors.

"You will tell me," Mr. Hamilton went on, "that there is one weak point in this evidence: why did not this man disappear with his booty? He would have had two days' start of any possible suspicion since he had announced he would be away from the office for two days. That so clever a man should have lingered about the seat of his crime until he became inextricably tangled in the toils he had so clumsily woven for another, is but another direct evidence, to my mind, of an overruling Providence.

"But the means which that Providence took to accomplish its ends were simple. He would not leave until he could persuade the woman he loved madly and blindly to leave with him. Once disencumbered of his booty, he believed he could come back and tell her of the rich inheritance that had fallen to him; paint the charms of life on the beautiful Otsego and persuade her to marry him. That at first she gave him no encouragement, that she refused him as positively as she had done in Paris, did not discourage him, for she endeavored to make her refusal kind; she could not but pity a passion which had seemed to take such entire possession of the man.

"Later, when she had begun to doubt the truth of his story of an inheritance, and when she began to fear he had some designs against Sir Lionel, she did not answer him so decidedly, but kept him dangling, hoping thus to discover his designs, if he had any, and frustrate them. Her suspicions were of the vaguest until on the sloop, *Clermont,* on their way up the Hudson to West Point she, with others on the boat, noticed Mayor Livingston's entire change of manner toward Sir Lionel — his coldness and his averted looks. In a flash her keen feminine intuition traced the change to its right source — the visit of Mayor Livingston to his office the evening before and the probability that Mr. La Force had endeavored to poison the mayor's mind against Sir Lionel as he had endeavored to poison hers. That night she wrote a letter to Mr. La Force and sent it back to New York from West Point by the commandant's orderly, charging him with having slandered Sir Lionel, and demanding to know at once of what he accused him. Mr. La Force refused to tell her by letter, but promised she should know all when she came back to New York for the laying of the cornerstone. Of course, he accompanied this promise with another impassioned plea for himself.

"It was very soon after receiving this letter that Mr. Livingston told her of the robbery and his secretary's accusations against Sir Lionel. The whole matter seemed perfectly clear to Miss Desloge — that Mr. La Force was himself the criminal — but having no proof of the matter she did not dare accuse him to Mr. Livingston, who trusted him utterly, but contented herself with declaring she was absolutely sure of Sir Lionel's innocence; and it was easier to confine herself to such protestations because Mr. Livingston, also, did not believe him guilty.

"It was now within a few days of the time for starting for New York. Miss Desloge was in a terrible dilemma — what was her duty? Was it her duty to accuse Mr. La Force or at least to convey to Mr. Livingston her suspicions and give him her reasons for them? It seemed impossible to her to do that, remembering that she had once called him friend, and that, however false he might be in other matters, his love for her seemed true, sincere and ardent. While still debating her duty, she answered Mr. La Force's letter by a brief note telling him she should hold him to his promise when she saw him in New York and saying nothing of the promise he had begged for in return. Her silence Mr. La Force took for encouragement, as she probably knew he would, and he met her on her return to New York with something of the confident air of an accepted suitor. This was a great trial to Miss Desloge, and with difficulty she schooled herself to treat him with ordinary civility. She would probably have been obliged to find relief for her feelings in confiding her suspicions to Mr. Livingston but for the fact of Sir Lionel's unexpected appearance in New York and immediate arrest. The very next day his counsel was appointed, and Miss Desloge sought him immediately, made a clean breast of her suspicions and difficulties and begged for advice. The advice was, on no account to say anything to anyone of her suspicions and to bear with Mr. La Force as best she could until the trial, which would be only a week away. She implored, if there was any possible way, to be excused from testifying, but there was none, though the examination was made as little difficult as possible for her.

"One other small point and I am done with my tale," said Mr. Hamilton drawing more closely to the jurors and adopting a quiet, confidential tone, "Mr. La Force's 'incontrovertible proof' was the marked coin, and the fact that he had marked every coin as it was deposited in the drawers. The veriest child could see how quickly he broke down under examination on that point — *there were no marked coins.* But Mr. La Force omitted to state — possibly it had passed his mind — that if Pompey's coin had been marked it could have been no proof of my client's guilt, for on the very day before my client took charge of the office, Mr. La Force had *himself changed a large sum of English gold into American gold for him.*"

There was a stillness that could be felt in the court-room as Mr. Hamilton drew his slender figure up to its full height and regarded the jurors silently for a moment with those wonderful, flashing eyes.

"Gentlemen of the jury," he said slowly and impressively, "I leave my client in your hands. You have heard the evidence, you have heard what I had to tell you in addition to or in explanation of the evidence. I cannot control your decision but I can demand," and here he wheeled suddenly and faced the judge with outstretched arm —"I do demand — the *arrest of Mr. La Force!*"

It was when Mr. Hamilton had begun to tell of Miss Desloge's suspicions and the means she had employed to conceal them and to frustrate his designs, that I saw Mr. La Force's eyes drop, his hands clench, his whole body become rigid. Every eye but mine in that house was on Mr. Hamilton as he spoke his concluding words; mine, alone, were on Mr. La Force. I saw his swift glance about the room that discovered no one was watching him, and the sudden spring, light, swift, silent and graceful as the panther with which, in my thoughts, I had been comparing him. He was through the window and on the balcony, and no one seemed to have seen him but me. In my excitement I forgot that I was a prisoner. I leaped to my feet and shouted wildly, "Stop him! Stop him! He's gone!"

In a moment everything was in the wildest confusion, and, still forgetting that I was a prisoner, I was over the railing of my box, across the platform and with one leap had cleared the space between the platform and the window before I remembered. No one was thinking of me, I could easily have escaped. I looked through the window and saw La Force running like the wind down Broad Street. How he had managed to get down from that high balcony — the same that my Jehu had pointed out to me on the day of my arrival as the sacred spot where Washington had taken his first oath of office — I could not guess. But I was in an agony to follow him. What he had done, I was very sure I could do. There was no feat of agility I would not dare attempt, and everybody else was so slow, running back through the long room and down the long steps.

At that moment I saw La Force disappear into a garden gate on Broad Street and still no pursuer in sight. I looked back at the judge and jury in an agony of spirit, for my soul had been wrought to the highest pitch of indignation and righteous anger during Mr. Hamilton's speech, and the thought of La Force's escape was unbearable.

As I looked back a wonderful thing was taking place. The foreman of the jury was on his feet and, amid all the tumult, I heard him say:

"Your Honor, the jury has come to a decision. May we give it without waiting for further proceedings?"

The judge looked at the prosecuting attorney; the prosecuting attorney nodded his assent and the judge gave his. Jury, judge and counsel were anxious to be free and away after the fugitive.

"Not Guilty, Your Honor," called the foreman quickly.

"I declare the prisoner free!" pronounced the judge, rising hastily to his feet as he spoke; and the prisoner, shouting gratefully but hurriedly, "I thank Your Honor and the Jury," was out of the window and away.

XXIII

ON THE TRAIL

TWO weeks from the day I sprang out of the window of Federal Hall to follow La Force, almost to the very hour, a party of six rode up under the Clermont maples, a magnificent canopy of scarlet and gold fit for kings to walk under. And the six were Kemble, Ogden, Irving, Cooper, myself and — my big American!

When I had found my way to the ground from that high balcony by sliding down a slender water pipe I met the throng tumbling pellmell down the steps, and at my cry: "He has gone through to the Broadway!" they turned and followed me instead of rushing down Broad Street, for which they were headed.

But all our pursuit was fruitless. The Broadway was deserted, and though we searched the house and garden I had seen him enter, we found no trace of him. An hour we spent in vain rushing up one street and down another, and at Cooper's suggestion, out to the Paulus Hook ferry. But the ferry was just making its landing on the Jersey side. At that distance it was impossible to distinguish whether he was one of the little throng leaving the boat. It would be another hour before the ferry returned, we would have a breathing spell to determine on our plan of pursuit; for we had come to be as certain as young Cooper that he had crossed to the other side and was well on his way to Otsego Lake. And young William Jay being the bearer of a message from Mr. Livingston that he particularly desired my presence at his house, as he had a surprise in store for me, we arranged to meet there in an hour with all preparations made for our expedition.

Kemble and William accompanied me to Mr. Livingston's and we were still talking eagerly of our plans as we walked back through Cortlandt Street and down Broadway to Number one. Kemble and I concluded that, if Cooper agreed with us, we would limit our party to four or five. A larger number would probably only retard our speed, and, if the Hurons were as friendly as Cooper represented them, there would be no question of fighting; we would only have to lay the case before their chief to have La Force delivered up to us. William was begging to be allowed to go with us, but to this I would not hear.

"You are far too young, William," I said firmly, "to endure such a forced march as we must make, and there is no possible way of getting your father's consent in time. Back to school you must go. But there is one friend," I added, turning to Kemble and paying no attention to William's loud demurrals, "that I would give anything to have with us. He and his great horse Bourbon would be worth a dozen ordinary men and horses."

"I know whom you mean. It's a pity there is no way of getting word to Philadelphia in time," said Kemble gravely. Whereupon William uttered a short and most unmannerly laugh. I looked at him in some surprise, for I had discovered no occasion for laughing. He apologized at once, said he did not know why he laughed, and to cover his confusion began to insist that I must take Saladin with me.

"Your friend's horse could be no better than Saladin," he declared proudly.

"I don't believe there's a horse in the world better than Saladin, William," I returned warmly, "and if you are really willing that I should take him with me, nothing could give me greater pleasure."

"I wish you would keep him and call him your own while you are in this country, Sir Lionel," said the boy shyly. He had been developing a sort of hero worship for me since my arrest and now nothing could be too good for me.

I was glad I was to have Saladin for this emergency, but all the time we had been discussing him I was saying to myself—"In a few minutes I will see Mademoiselle. How will she receive me? What must I say to her? What words can I ever find to express my gratitude?" I thought little of the surprise in store for me, and when I did it was only with an uneasy feeling that Mayor Livingston was preparing some public demonstration of congratulations that would be little to my taste.

Yet when the surprise came it put to flight, for the time, all thoughts of Mademoiselle. As we entered Mr. Livingston's noble library, the low western sun illuminated strongly a little group standing in a bow window at the end of the room. It turned Mademoiselle's hair to burnished copper and I could not be sure whether it was the sun or some strong emotion that made her wonderful eyes glow like stars as they were raised to someone with whom she was talking. For a moment I looked only at Mademoiselle, then I too lifted my eyes to see with whom she could be talking. Bending toward her, his golden curls like an aureole about his fine head, his dark blue eyes beaming with interest and friendliness, stood the man who, every time I had seen him, had made me think of a Greek god, the man who more than any other man I would like to have for a companion on the expedition to Otsego. He lifted his head at that moment and saw me and came toward me quickly, both hands outstretched, in the fashion I suppose he had learned in France; and he looked so glad to see me I was half afraid he was going to kiss me after the French fashion, and I was so glad to see him I would not have minded much if he had.

"Did my wishing for you bring you?" I asked, when the first greetings were over.

"I came the moment I heard of your troubles, but I see I came too late to be of any service, for which I am half sorry," he answered.

"How long can you stay?" I asked abruptly.

"I came intending to stay as long as you needed me. Since you do not need me, I must return to-morrow, I think."

"Is it because of your father you must go so soon?" I asked anxiously.

"My father is better, very much better, or I could not have left him. He urged me to come, but I know he misses me, and if I can be of no service here, my place is beside him."

I did not answer. I was not sure that I ought to say what I was longing to say —"Come with us to find La Force."

These few minutes that we had been talking together, the whole company had stood silently looking on, their faces beaming with their sympathy in our joy at the meeting, as I discovered when I looked around me now. Mayor Livingston was the first to come forward to speak to me and then the others crowded around, eager to express their delight in the verdict. Mademoiselle was the last and was a little shy, I thought, which was unusual for her, for I had often envied her perfect self-possession, which never seemed to desert her in any crisis. But when I tried to thank her for what she had done for me, she interrupted me, and I thought she spoke coldly.

"I could do no less, Sir Lionel; I got you into this trouble. It behooved me to do all I could to help you out of it."

"Got me into it?" I echoed, not seeing in the least what connection she had with my trouble, and being very stupid that I did not see.

"Yes." She colored painfully and spoke with effort. "If you do not see in what way I am responsible, I am very glad, but none the less I know that, but for me, you would never have had to endure the suffering and ignominy of the last week and I feel that I have not done half enough — I can never do enough — to atone for it."

Then it flashed into my mind what she meant. Of course; it was La Force's desire to win her that had proved too strong for him to resist the temptation of taking the money, and it was his jealousy of me that had made him select me as his victim.

"All right," I answered her gayly, for my spirits were rising with every word she said. "Have it as you will. I like very well indeed to have you feel under obligation to me, for I have so long been owing you the life you saved from the yellow fever, that the burden of debt had begun to be very heavy. Shall we call it quits now and begin all over?"

"Yes, if you like," with a gay little smile and that familiar twinkle in her eye.

A black servant had just announced dinner and Mademoiselle and I were for a moment apart in the bow window while Mayor Livingston was gathering his guests together.

"Then if we are beginning all over," I said quickly, and in so low a voice no one could overhear, "I want you to take back what you said — that you would never marry anyone but a Frenchman."

"Did I say that?" with a teasing smile.

"Have you forgotten it?"

She saw that I was too deeply in earnest to admit of jesting.

"No, Sir Lionel," she said gravely, "I have not forgotten it. But I must say once more I will never marry anyone but one of my own countrymen."

The time had been ill chosen. I should not have ventured on a renewal of my suit at such a moment, when I must face a dinner table full of friends with an unmoved countenance. But something in her eyes and her twinkling smile had lured me on irresistibly to my fall. The blood rushed back to my heart in a torrent at her words, and it took every atom of will power I possessed to hold myself steady and keep my lips firm as I bowed silently and offered her my arm to conduct her to the table. She must have seen my painful struggle and to divert my mind, no doubt, she said teasingly:

"But who knows! If Bonaparte has his usual good luck in this war, England will be a French province and we will all be good Frenchmen together."

She angered me, as she knew she would, for no good Briton could hear Bonaparte so spoken of, even in jest, without flashing fire.

"I will die first, Mademoiselle," I exclaimed proudly, looking defiance straight into her eyes.

And what did I see in her eyes? I believed with all my heart it was a generous glow of admiration and I seated her at the table with a lighter heart than I would have thought possible a few minutes before.

I had tried before dinner to express my thanks to Mr. Hamilton, and my admiration of the manner in which he had conducted my case, though I had not succeeded to my own satisfaction, since it had been in a hubbub of greetings and congratulations. I was seated near him at table and since, for the moment, I did not feel equal to saying anything further to Mademoiselle Desloge, I turned to him to make a fuller acknowledgment of my debt to him. Mademoiselle, it seemed to me, rather welcomed the opportunity to talk to Mr. Livingston, on whose left she sat — Mrs. Hamilton being on his right, of course — and so I was somewhat distracted and floundered in my thanks.

"I never won an easier case," said Mr. Hamilton smiling. "Miss Desloge and Mr. Cooper did all the work. And, by the way, what has become of Mr. Cooper?"

"He is waiting at Paulus Hook Ferry, sir, to find out whether or not Mr. La Force crossed. He will be here to report soon, I think, and, if he did cross, Mr. Cooper is going to guide us to the Huron camp, provided he can get leave of absence."

Everybody stopped to listen to this announcement and there was an immediate chorus — Who 's going? When do you start? and many other questions impossible to answer in a breath. When I had succeeded in making it clear that we would probably start within an hour or two, and that we thought it best to limit our number to four or five, Irving, who, with Mayor Livingston, had conducted the ladies home from the trial and so had not been with us in the pursuit, called from the lower end of the table, "I am one of the five, Sir Lionel!"

"With all my heart"— I began, but almost in the same breath, Mayor Livingston and Mr. Hamilton interrupted.

"You must not think of it, Washington!" exclaimed the mayor authoritatively.

"Your health will not allow it; your family would not permit it," said Mr. Hamilton more gently.

I saw Irving color with annoyance. I learned later that he never liked to have his health spoken of, but I had myself noted that he had a troublesome cough and looked far from strong. He recovered his equanimity in a moment, however, and answered with his usual gayety.

"If it's only my health that prevents, nothing could be better for me, and my family will be more than willing. They are talking of sending me on a long horseback trip through the mountains north of Saratoga for the very purpose of giving me some rough out-door life to counteract the effects of my severe application to my law studies."

This last was said with a droll affectation of solemnity and was greeted with a shout of laughter, for Irving's laziness in his profession and skill in slighting his studies was well known.

In the interchange of chaffing that followed I took no part, for it was sufficiently noisy to give me an opportunity to say something to Miss Desloge that I greatly desired to say.

"Mademoiselle," I said, "I inadvertently saw a letter lying on the hall table at West Point addressed to Mr. La Force; it was a great relief of mind to me when I learned to-day the object of that letter."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, twinkling and dimpling as she always did when she was merry. "That was it, was it? I could not guess what ailed you that first week at Clermont, and I have always wanted to know."

I was not in a merry mood, but I could never resist her, when her eyes twinkled.

"What a silly bear you must have thought me, but you will own a letter written to my rival, and burning the midnight oil in your haste to get it off, was enough to give me an attack of the grumps."

"More than enough. But I honestly never thought you silly, though I can't deny you were a little of a bear."

"Not a cub, I hope."

"Oh, no! Not a *little* bear, but a big, growling Bruin that frightened me to death every time I looked at him. And I had meant to be so nice to you at Clermont and I thought we would have such good times together, and you spoiled them all. I was dreadfully disappointed."

"I wish I could think so," I answered, "but I cannot believe that anyone but I suffered the pangs of disappointment."

"Oh, not pangs, perhaps, but a sort of — gentle regret. And all about a foolish letter."

"Not all about a foolish letter," I corrected, "but foolishly, all about a letter."

"Yes, that's better. But enough of the letter. I have something very serious to say to you."

"You frighten me. But say on. My courage is screwed to the sticking point."

"Do not jest, please. I beg you will not go with the pursuit."

Her eyes were wells of tenderness; I hardly dared look down into them while she spoke so gently and so winningly. But I steeled my heart against her softness.

"Not go with the pursuit? But I *am* the pursuit. To me, more than to anyone, belongs the duty of bringing the criminal to justice and restoring the city's money to Mayor Livingston."

I had forgotten for the moment that La Force had once been a friend of hers and it would be strange indeed if there were not some tenderness lingering in her heart for him; and that it was for him and not for me that she was begging. But if I had forgotten it, for a moment, it came back to me with a flash when she answered me severely:

"Less to you than to anyone. You have borne enough and suffered enough. I hope, with all my heart, for Mr. Livingston's sake, that the city's money will be recovered, but if Mr. La Force is to be captured, I hope you will have no hand in it."

It was on the tip of my tongue to demand sternly, "Why?" but at that moment Mr. Ogden and Mr. Cooper were announced, and in the excitement that followed there was no further opportunity for speech with Mademoiselle.

There could be no doubt that La Force had been one of the passengers. Though the ferryman did not know him, he had noticed a passenger answering accurately to his description. More than that, as good fortune would have it, Captain Drake had been one of the return passengers on his way home from a visit to Liberty Hall, and had readily granted the leave of absence to young Cooper when he heard the case, and the ferryman was willing to take us across at any moment we should appoint.

Kemble, Irving and I, with one impulse, and without waiting for apologies to our host, sprang to our feet at these tidings.

"We are ready!" I exclaimed. "And here are the five: Kemble, Irving, Ogden, Mr. Cooper and myself. Shall we start at once, gentlemen?"

"You have forgotten me," said Lloyd, rising to his feet as he spoke, and smiling down on me across the table.

My heart gave a great bound.

"Do you mean it?" I cried.

"I never meant anything more. I should have missed my aim in coming, if I could not help you in this emergency."

"I would rather have you and Bourbon than an army with banners!" I cried enthusiastically. "Can he go, Kemble?"

"You 're captain, Sir Lionel," laughed Kemble, "and I reckon he 'll have to go. You would rather have him than all the rest of us put together."

"Not quite, but almost. But to have him *with* all you others makes us invincible."

It was all excitement and confusion for the next hour. Ogden, Kemble, Irving and Cooper rushed off to see about horses and other arrangements; Lloyd and I hurried around to the City Tavern for Bourbon and Saladin, and to make some necessary preparations for the expedition; "Mammy," at Mr. Livingston's orders, set to work providing delicacies enough to provision an army of epicures, and William was dispatched, greatly to his delight at being allowed to help, to see that the ferryman would be ready for us at seven.

For a few minutes all was excitement and confusion, there was little time for farewells among the multiplicity of directions and instructions; but one word with Mademoiselle I hoped for and got. Mr. Hamilton was saying to me with his whimsical smile:

"It 's a good thing you did n't take me up on my two wagers, Sir Lionel. I should have lost both of them. The jury did not go out at all and I see no prospect of the criminal spending the night in the Bridewell."

"I 'll take you that he will spend this night two weeks there, Mr. Hamilton," cried Ogden.

I saw a quick contraction of Miss Desloge's brow, and knew what it meant. I took an instant resolve. While the others were discussing the wager, laughing and noisily, I turned to her and spoke quietly:

"This much I promise you, Mademoiselle, if I can find any honorable way to secure Mayor Livingston's money and allow Mr. La Force to escape I will do it."

Her troubled face flashed into smiles.

"Oh, thank you!" was all she said, but she extended her hand impulsively and I could not be mistaken — a gentle pressure returned my ardent one.

And so that was how my friend Lloyd came to be one of the six riding up under the Clermont maples. And a tower of strength he had proved, just as I knew he would. Dashing down the rocky defiles of the Shawangunks, black night all about us, the woods, for aught we knew, full of unfriendly savages; often hearing the snarl of a wild cat, the stealthy glide of a snake or the blood-curdling cry of a panther, so like a living child's, his nerves were as steady as if he were riding down the Broadway and his Indian lore and his lore of the woods served us in good stead more than once.

When we had left the wild mountains behind us we followed the windings of the river with the beautiful Indian name through a smiling region of meadow, field and orchard; comfortable farmhouses with big barns behind them, bursting with garnered grain; golden pumpkins lying on sunny slopes between dried stalks of Indian corn stripped of their ears and left to turn brown in the weather; orchards gay with men and women wearing jackets and shawls of warm red or brilliant blue to protect them from the frosty air while they gathered the crimson apples and packed them in barrels for the market or tossed them into great hampers to be stowed away in cellar bins for winter eating; and under every spreading chestnut or stately walnut youthful harvesters were making the woods ring as they gathered their rich crop of nuts.

Hill and valley were aflame. Never had I dreamed of anything so gorgeous as that riot of crimson and gold. And as we rode gayly through this fair landscape, the air we breathed and through which we saw all this blaze of beauty was so softly golden and so crisply exhilarating it was like the sparkling, amber-colored wine of Orvieto, and no wonder we burst often into rollicking song more like a band of troubadours at some gay pageant than like a little company of men intent on an errand of stern justice.

And if Lloyd was not as foolishly gay as some of us he was no damper on the effervescing spirits of anyone, and it was due to him, I have no doubt, that our passage through the smiling farm lands was a triumphal progress. From every orchard and every chestnut grove boys and girls trooped out to bring us apples and nuts from their store; and did we but stop at a farmhouse for a drink of water, shy maidens and comely matrons pressed upon us milk, and bread and butter, and always a kind of cake they called variously "fried-cake," "cruller," or "doughnut"; and no matron or no maiden had an eye for any one of the six but the beautiful blonde giant, nor ear for any thanks but his, most courteously expressed.

On the last day we rode along a high shelf overlooking the valley of the winding river, catching an occasional silvery glimpse of it through the thick copses that marked its course, and descending, toward evening, to cross the little river at a ford near its head which Cooper knew, as he had known every step of the way, so far — we would, indeed, often have been at a loss without him. He led us through a shaded grotto where overhanging maples and birches made a perfect lady's bower, to a great bowlder projecting half into the lake and half into the river at the very point where the two met. And there framed by the arching foliage, there burst upon us the jewelled lake lying, opal-tinted, under the amethyst haze of sunset, between soft slopes of emerald turf on the west and bold rocky headlands on the east, flaming in the topaz and ruby of birch and maple.

As we stood, lost in the amazing splendor of the glowing lake, Cooper pointed out to us, far up the eastern side, some strange-looking huts, and a curl of faint blue smoke that he said was the camp of the Hurons.

"And what is the smoke on the western shore?" asked Lloyd in his calm voice, indicating with extended arm a blue column rising just beyond a point of land running out into the lake. Cooper uttered a hasty exclamation.

"Strange! Can it be possible the Hurons have divided into two camps? The one on the western shore is at Three Mile Point, their old camping ground. When I saw the one on the east I supposed they had changed their location for some reason. I fear me now the eastern camp may belong to hostile Indians."

As he spoke, from behind the wooded Three Mile Point, following a road leading toward the head of the lake, we distinctly saw a wagon emerge, drawn by a pair of horses and driven furiously.

"Quick, Cooper! Look!" I exclaimed excitedly. "Is that La Force's wagon?"

"Can you tell whether there is one white horse and one black one?" he cried eagerly.

We all strained our eyes to see, but it was Lloyd who answered quietly:

"Yes, the off horse is white, the nigh one is black."

And every man of us knew that La Force had reached the Huron camp ahead of us, secured his treasure, and was hurrying away with it to some point he believed more secure.

Nor was there one of us who stopped for a moment to regret the good supper and comfortable lodgings Cooper had assured us were awaiting us at his father's house in the little village just across the sparkling Susquehanna. But each one tightened his saddle girths and looked well to pistols and powder before he sprang once more into his saddle, with a glance of the eye so stern and a set of the jaw so grim as I had never before seen in those light-hearted lads.

XXIV

WE CAPTURE THE CHEST AND AN OWL SCREECHES

LA FORCE had a good four miles the start of us, so Cooper said, and his horses were fresh, yet we did not for a moment doubt that, even with our jaded steeds, we could overtake him, since he was encumbered with a wagon.

It was odd, but no command had been given for that pursuit; we were of one mind and acted as one man. Galloping madly around the curving southern shore of the lake and then along the western slopes, sometimes having our quarry in view, oftener losing him behind projecting points of land or where the road dipped into the forest, as it often did, only to reappear again and follow the pebbly curve of the beach, I thought many times of my promise to Mademoiselle. How I was to keep it, I could hardly see. With the best will in the world the others would overrule me — of that I was sure, so grim and forbidding was each man's face as he rode. Even the laughing Irving, incarnate spirit of jollity, was for once as stern as any judge. Lloyd rode up beside me where the trail broadened.

"What is it, Sir Lionel?"

"What is what?" I asked.

"What is troubling you? You have been brooding over something for the last ten minutes."

And then I told him of my promise to Miss Desloge and how little prospect I saw of being able to redeem it, and how uncertain I felt whether I had any right to try.

Lloyd thought a moment before he answered. Indeed, I had often noted it as one of his peculiarities that when he had anything of weight to say he always stopped first to think. I wish I could learn it of him, I so often speak impulsively to my cost. At last he spoke.

"I believe you are right to try," he said slowly. "There is something due Miss Desloge in this affair, for, without her willingness to sacrifice herself in the cause of justice, the truth would probably never have been known. And, after all, the money is the thing."

I was glad he did not intimate that it was for my sake she had made the sacrifice, though sometimes, when I remembered the glance she gave me as she left the witness-box, I half persuaded myself that it was partly, at least, for my sake.

"But how am I to accomplish it?" I asked Lloyd. "I am very sure neither Irving, Cooper nor Ogden will consent to letting him go."

"Leave that to the opportunities of the moment," he answered. "I will help you, and I believe between us both we can so manage as to make it appear unintentional on our part, and impossible of prevention by any of us."

And then, hesitating a little, as he always did when he had any confidence to make about the Comtesse de Baloit, he told me of his like experience with the Chevalier Le Moyne, whom he had allowed to escape at the request of the comtesse.

It had been nearly two months since I had seen Lloyd; in that time he might easily have heard from the comtesse and I could not forbear asking him if he had.

"Only once," he answered, "about two weeks after my return. I think it more than likely that by this time she has married the Prince de Polignac; it would be most suitable, and in any event it is a closed chapter with me."

The grim set of his jaws, the sternly mournful glance of his eyes told his tale. I was silent, for I knew not how to express the sympathy that wrung my heart, and in a moment he recovered himself and turned to me with an effort at gaiety:

"But tell me of Mademoiselle Desloge. From what I could observe it seemed to me that your friendship had progressed far since our voyage on the *Sea Gull.*"

"As far as I could carry it," I answered gloomily. "But she will have none of me. She vows she will never marry anyone but a Frenchman."

An exclamation from Cooper, just behind us, interrupted the words of friendly encouragement Lloyd was beginning to utter.

"Look, Sir Lionel!" he cried, "I believe he's making for that other camp! What do you suppose that means?"

We had been for a few moments so engaged in our own affairs, Lloyd and I, that though still galloping on, we had neglected to keep watch of La Force. Now, at Cooper's exclamation, I saw that he had emerged from the woods at the head of the lake, and instead of keeping a northerly course, as we had supposed he would, toward the Canadian border, he was turning south again toward that other camp on the eastern shore of the lake. None of us could understand why, but we thought it possible the Hurons could explain it to us and we were just rounding that Three Mile Point on the other side of which lay their camp.

It was my first acquaintance with an Indian camp, and my first meeting with Indians. The camp was curious enough with its round huts formed of leafy boughs (though one or two were of skins stretched on poles), and its motley throng of children, dogs and squaws with papooses strapped on their backs. They were making ready their supper to be eaten in the open around the camp-fires, and we were hungry enough to make the odor of their venison, roasting on spits before the open fire, seem good to our nostrils, and the sight of the coarse cakes, baking on hot stones, enticing to our eyes. The chief, with the older men and the young braves about him, was seated at a little distance gravely watching the preparations for supper, and none of them offered help to the squaws, not even so much as to carry the heavy buckets of water from the nearby spring. At sight of us the men, all but the old chief, rose to their feet, and two of the young braves came forward to question us as to our business. They recognized Cooper and readily granted his request for an interview with the chief.

I confess I was greatly impressed with the dignity and formality with which the interview was conducted. The young men were dismissed with an imperious wave of the old chief's hand, and only the older men, who seemed to form a kind of cabinet, remained for the conference. They all spoke a little English, and understood it better than they spoke it, therefore Cooper insisted I should take my place as Captain and conduct the interview. He said the Hurons were very jealous of their dignity and would not consider themselves treated with the proper courtesy should the duty of spokesman be relegated to the youngest member of the party. I suggested then that Lloyd be made spokesman, both his size and bearing could not fail to impress the savages, but he flatly refused the office and there was nothing left for me but to undertake it.

It was necessary that our conference should be brief, and yet both Lloyd and Cooper impressed upon me that there should be no appearance of haste and no neglect of complimentary forms. I flattered myself that I conducted it with some diplomacy; but with all the skill I could muster the old chief was more than my match. The only information I succeeded in extracting from him was that La Force had entrusted him with the care of a box and a wagon and horses a few weeks before, and that he had returned, as he had said he would, and but a brief half hour ago had left the camp with wagon, horses and box. He professed to know nothing of the contents of the box nor of La Force's destination. Also he professed to know nothing of the Indians encamped on the other shore. Doubtless they were as friendly to their white brethren as were the Hurons, and if, as the Pale-face captain said, the box contained money stolen from the White Father in the Great City, he did not doubt that it would be only necessary to tell our story to the chief of those other Indians and he would deliver up the box and the "Paleface with the devil eyes."

I quote the chief's designation for La Force, and I confess it pleased me; I could not have described him better. But in spite of the "devil eyes," or perhaps by means of them, I believe La Force had obtained some secret and powerful influence over the old chief, and while professing great willingness to assist us in our pursuit, he was really doing all he could to retard us and give La Force more time for escape. He drew out the conference to a length that made us all impatient before we could extract even this meager information from him, and when, finally, with many thanks for the kindness of the great chief to his white brother, I sought to bring the interview to a close, he pressed us so urgently to share the meal we could see was almost ready, that we found it difficult to decline without offending or appearing to offend the hospitable Hurons. Some of the good brown cakes we secured to take with us and eat as we rode (and we found them better to the eyes than to the taste, though they satisfied the cravings of hunger) a shining gold piece proving too much for the chief's sense of hospitality and dignity. A second gold piece procured us what we needed even more than food for ourselves, grain for our horses, and we rode away, each man's pockets stuffed with the brown cakes and a bag of grain dangling from his saddle bow.

I had noted two of the young braves in close conference with Cooper while our negotiations for the bread and grain were in process. Now, as we galloped on toward the head of the lake, Cooper rode up beside me to tell me the substance of the conference. They had warned Cooper not to trust the other Indians too far; they were not so friendly as the Hurons. They were Canadian Indians, who spoke a little French but no English, and were inclined always to be far more friendly to a Frenchman than to an Englishman. La Force knew this and counted upon their protection to the Canadian border.

Moreover, the young braves had had many questions to ask Cooper about our party, whence they had come and why; but more particularly were they curious about Lloyd, whose size and beauty seemed to have impressed them greatly. They regarded him as some kind of a Paleface god, Cooper thought, and I did not wonder.

The sun had set and the late moon had not yet risen when we drew near the second camp, but a glowing camp-fire, whose red reflection was flung far out on the waters of the lake, guided us directly to our goal. Since these Indians spoke only French, Lloyd, to whom French was as easy as his mother tongue, was to conduct the negotiations. I wonder that we felt no more uneasiness than we did as we approached the camp, for the warning of the young Hurons ought to have forearmed us. But we had found the Hurons so friendly that, for myself, at least, I had lost, in a great measure, my fear of any savage. They were evidently expecting us, and their warriors had donned all their finery to impress us. Imposing head-dresses of bright-hued feathers, brilliant-colored blankets worn with something of the dignity and grace of a Roman toga, richly beaded moccasins and belts from which hung the glittering tomahawk made a brave show, and quite satisfied the ideal I had formed of the appearance of an Indian. They wore no firearms, but a disorderly heap of rifles was piled within easy reach. La Force was nowhere in sight, nor was his wagon, but once I caught a distant sound that I recognized as the neigh of a horse, and I believed it came from one of La Force's horses.

The first part of the interview was most friendly, though most false. They had not seen any Paleface with horses and a wagon; no doubt the one we sought had gone on beyond their camp farther down the lake. If their white brethren liked, the chief of the Iroquois would furnish some of his young men as guides to conduct them through the forest, since on this side of the lake the cliffs rose straight from the water and there was no road along the shore.

Lloyd professed himself grateful for the chief's offer; he would consult with his friends and possibly, after a night's rest, which they greatly needed, they would be glad to avail themselves of the proffered guides. With much formality and many stately compliments — this much I could understand, even with my poor French — he made his adieus. The chief pressed upon him the hospitality of the camp, supper and a lodge for himself and his friends, and I believe, had anyone but Lloyd been conducting the interview, we would never have been permitted to decline the hospitality; we would have been seized then and there. But Lloyd inspired the Iroquois with something of the same awe the Hurons had felt for him, and to them also, I have no doubt, he was a "Paleface god" and, at least so long as he was mounted on that magnificent black stallion, often impatiently snorting and pawing the ground, they dared not lay hands on him.

They allowed us all to withdraw unmolested to some distance in the woods, where we made a hasty camp for the night. Purposely, I had guided my party in the direction of the neigh I had heard. I thought it possible we might come upon the wagon and seize the box of treasure and make off with it in the night, leaving La Force to his Indian friends; in which case, I would have accomplished both my purposes — recovered the city's money and fulfilled my promise to Mademoiselle Desloge.

When we had found a little spring (this country seemed to be full of them) and fed and tethered our horses, I held a council of war. We had lighted no camp-fire and we talked with bated breath, for we hoped, if possible, to conceal our location from the Iroquois. Had I known Indians and their methods better, I would have known how vain such a hope was. I divulged my plan that two of our number should stay with the horses and the other three reconnoiter on foot, and, if possible, discover and carry away the box of treasure. Since Cooper had had experience with the great weight of the box, and since it would neither be feasible to burden any one of the horses with it, nor possible to steal the wagon without being discovered, it was part of my plan to bury the treasure at once, in a spot so marked that we could return to it after the Iroquois and La Force had left the country.

Lloyd at first demurred to my plan. He was very sure the box was strongly guarded and we would only get into trouble. He believed the best way was to wait until morning, go again to the Iroquois chief and *demand* the treasure in the name of the Great Father at Washington, a name that carried terror to the heart of every miscreant Indian.

I am not sure that the result would have been any different had we followed Lloyd's advice, but Ogden, Irving, Cooper and Kemble were all for my plan, and Lloyd, seeing he was in a hopeless minority, yielded with a good grace and went into it heart and soul. We waited only until we believed the Iroquois camp was buried in slumber. Cooper and Irving were left with the horses, and guided by an occasional soft sound as of the restive hoofs of a horse, the rest of us groped our way slowly through the blackness; at times, standing still and holding our breath when one of us had inadvertently stepped on a little branch or had rustled the dry leaves by a careless shuffle, when each foot should have been lifted high and set down noiselessly. After one such misstep, when it seemed to me the snap of the breaking branch was as loud as the report of a pistol and would wake the seven sleepers, we stood a full two minutes as if carved from stone before I would give the muffled order to go on. And once I was almost sure I caught the sound of another stealthy foot that belonged to none of us, and we waited another two minutes, scarcely daring to breathe and listening for the sound again.

Our progress was slow and often we lost our direction and had to retrace our steps, so that it must have been almost an hour before we came so near the horses that we could hear the quiet breathing of one as if asleep and the soft munch of the other, evidently browsing, and yet I do not think they could have been more than two hundred yards from the spot where our own horses were tethered. But we had no use for their horses and it was necessary that we should not startle them lest they give the alarm to the camp. It was the wagon we were after, and groping our way from tree to tree, keeping well out of the horses' path, we finally stumbled upon the wagon. It was Ogden whose extended arm touched it first and reaching out with his other arm to find Lloyd and me in the dark, he silently drew us to its side.

Now I had been very sure La Force would have left his heavy box in the wagon that he might be ready to fly on an instant's warning, but I had been quite as sure he would leave it well guarded, and to remove the box without alarming the guards I had feared would prove an almost impossible task. I had yet to learn what a wonderful thing is strength, and what a marvelous degree of it Lloyd possessed, combined with the quietness of nerve that neither worries nor hurries over an appointed task. The task had not been of his seeking, he had been as sure as I that the treasure would be well guarded, but the exploit having been decided upon he proceeded to execute it in as matter-of-fact fashion as if there had been no daring needed. And Ogden was as brave and almost as cool. He was neither quite so powerful nor quite so cool-headed as Lloyd, but he was not far behind him in either quality. He on one side of the wagon, and Lloyd on the other, with an almost incredible deliberation and strength, slowly moved the chest to the open end of the wagon and so out of it, while Kemble and I stood on guard, a pistol in each hand, ready for instant action should the guard be aroused. But no guard appeared, and silently, stealthily, we moved cautiously back to our camp.

In that short journey it was necessary to stop and rest several times and so slow was our progress that almost another hour was consumed before we reached our camp. We could hardly believe our own good fortune that we should have accomplished our mission without molestation; there only remained to bury our treasure and steal away before daylight should discover his loss to La Force. But here a new difficulty confronted us. We had neither pickax nor spade, the soil was hard and gravelly, and we could do little with only our hands or, at best, sticks for tools. I was for forcing open the box and filling our saddle bags with as much of the treasure as we could carry, leaving the rest of his ill-gotten gains to La Force. But the box was strongly made and strongly barred. Without tools that, too, would have been a work of time and, would perhaps, have necessitated a noise that would betray us.

While we were still discussing the matter in whispers the moon, which had lately risen but up to this time had been obscured behind a high hill to the east of us, casting all that part of the forest into black shadow, now appeared above the hill crest, and though its rays were still obstructed by the trees, it shed a mild radiance quite sufficient to discover our surroundings to us. We glanced around us rather fearfully, not sure but the light would reveal us to the Iroquois, and we saw with relief that we were not in view of their camp. But Cooper saw something else, also, and a hasty exclamation, only half smothered, escaped him. He sprang to his feet as he spoke:

"Gentlemen, I know the very spot! Natty Bumpo's cave! Do you think we could manage to get the chest half way up that hill?" pointing to the rocky promontory west of us, rising precipitately from the water on the lake's side but of a more gradual slope on the side toward us.

Ogden shrugged his shoulders and looked doubtful.

"It was all we could manage on the level," he whispered.

Lloyd thought a moment before he spoke.

"If we could get some rope and some strong poles," he said slowly, "we could four of us carry it on our shoulders; but we have no rope, have we?"

"Yes," I answered eagerly, "we have. We can use the tethering ropes from the horses. I am sure Saladin needs no tether and I do not believe either Natty Bumpo or Bourbon do, either."

In a moment we were all excitement. Irving, Cooper and Kemble set out to find the poles and Lloyd, Ogden and I cut the tethering ropes, bound the chest with them, and, thanks to my sea-training at Clover Combe, I knotted securely, sailor fashion, loops at the four corners through which to slip the poles Cooper and Irving had found ready to their hand, the wreck of some recent storm.

We were of one mind that Irving was not strong enough to take a hand in the bearing of the chest. He was left with the horses while the rest of us set out cautiously on our upward path under Cooper's guidance. It was a steep and arduous climb, with our heavy burden. We must not only climb half way up the steep hill, but, by a path so narrow that only by crowding close to the rocky wall could we find footing, we must needs pass round the face of the cliff overlooking the lake. It was a dangerous passage. A misstep would have sent us hurling into the dark waters lying a hundred feet below us, and we must needs be steady of head as well as sure of foot, lest we turn dizzy. Had we not all been full of the mad daring of youth we could not have accomplished it, and none of us was sorry when, turning a sharp corner, a difficult feat on that narrow path at that dizzy height, we saw a low dark cavity in the face of the rock. We had to stoop to enter it, and inside it was black as pitch, but groping our way forward we soon came to the rear wall of the cave, and kneeling down with as little noise as we could manage, we deposited the chest on the ground.

We felt secure enough in this inaccessible retreat to dare to speak above a whisper, and congratulating each other on our success we sat down a moment, using the chest as a bench, to recover our breath. I was wildly elated and so were Ogden and Kemble. Lloyd and Cooper were not quite so sure that our difficulties were over; they knew more of the ways of the savages than did we. It seemed to me an easy matter to retrace our steps, mount our horses, slip away before the dawn, and return for the chest at our leisure. I felt that our mission was done and well done.

Remembering that it had taken us much time to make that arduous passage to the cave, and that the dawn could not be very far away, I permitted only a few minutes for rest before I gave the order for the return march. The difficulties of our descent were not great, though we still found we needed a steady head on the narrow path around the cliff, but in half an hour at the most we were close to our camp. We had been gone, altogether, an hour and a half or two hours, time enough for much to happen. And the worst had happened.

Observing even greater caution as we approached the camp, we were creeping slowly forward when we were startled by the weird cry of a screech owl, so close it sounded in our very ears.

"A signal!" exclaimed Lloyd in a whisper. But the word was hardly out of his mouth when each man of us was seized from behind, his arms pinioned, and in a trice his pistols and sword removed.

All but Lloyd's. Two stalwart savages had grappled him, one at each arm, but with the exertion of his tremendous strength he flung them to the right and left, dashed away through the woods with the unerring instinct of a falcon to where he had left Bourbon tethered, and before the two stalwart Iroquois had thoroughly recovered consciousness from the heavy fall that stunned them for a moment, we heard the clatter of Bourbon's hooves on the rocky beach.

And dismayed at the sudden capture; not knowing what fate awaited us — whether instant death or slow torture or long captivity — greater, for a moment, than all other dismay was the bitter thought that my big American friend had failed me in the hour of need. I had not known him; only a coward and a dastard could have used his great strength to make good his own escape and desert his comrades to their fate.

XXV

THERE'S MANY A SLIP

THE moment our arms were in their possession the savages released their hold on us and with a harsh word of command, "en avant!" from their leader we were marched, at the muzzles of our own pistols, to our camp.

No word had been spoken by any of us — there had been neither time nor opportunity for words — but a thousand wild thoughts had flashed through my brain as, no doubt, they were flashing through the brains of the others. When the mad rush of my bitterness toward Lloyd had, for the moment, subsided, my first conscious thought was, "What will Mademoiselle think when she hears of our fate? Or will she never know it?"

But there was no time to dwell on thoughts of Mademoiselle; anxiety for Irving soon drove out every other concern. What had happened to him? Was he dead or alive? In two minutes I knew, for a two minutes' march brought us to our camp and by the faint moonlight filtering through the heavy foliage we saw him seated by the spring where we had eaten our supper, a huge savage covering him with a rifle, and by his side, apparently talking to him, La Force!

"Irving," I exclaimed, "how did it happen?" and wondered that he did not reply so much as by a word; but in a moment I saw why. He was gagged! No doubt in order that he might make no outcry to warn us. The necessity for such caution being now over I saw La Force give some command to the savage guarding Irving, who removed the gag.

"Thank you, Mr. Savage," said Irving gravely to the Indian, who understood not a word he was saying. "A gag is a small, but remarkably uncomfortable instrument of torture; I am glad to have it removed. Also, I suppose you know that in this country it is illegal to deprive any man of his freedom of speech. I fear, sir, you have broken one of the statutes of these great United States, and insulted the majesty of the law, represented in my person, Washington Irving, Barrister!"

I was in no mood for jesting myself, but I was glad to see that it was still possible for him, and I believe his kindly intention was to relieve a little the terrible strain he knew I must be under, as leader of the expedition, and holding myself responsible for the safety of the party.

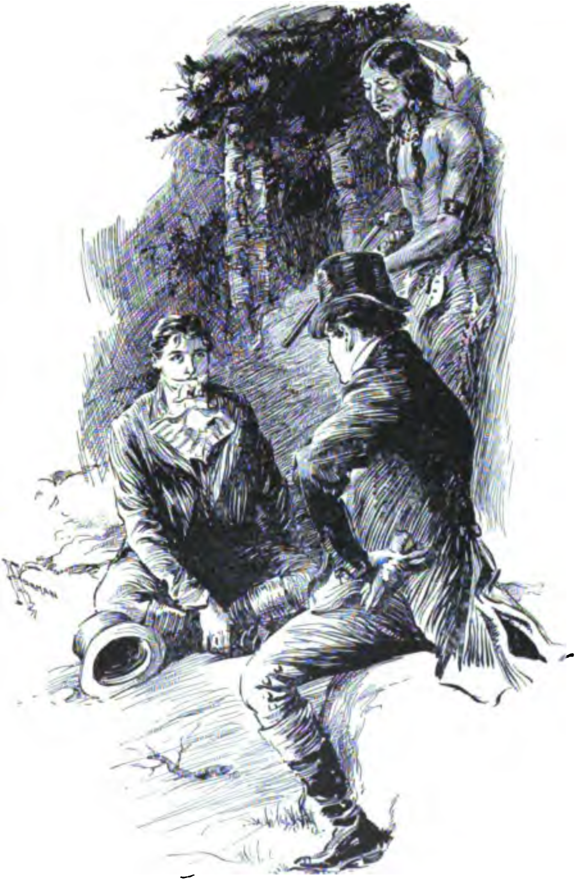
I was angered beyond endurance at the sight of La Force, the black lashes and white rims of his "devil-eyes," as the Hurons had called them, plainly visible in the faint moonlight.

"I suppose you know, Mr. La Force," I said to him, trying to speak calmly, "that in detaining our persons you are committing a crime against two great nations, the United States and England, and that it is not probable that either nation will rest until that crime is punished."

"I have thought of that, Sir Lionel," he answered coolly, "and I have warned my friends, the Iroquois, of the risks they run. But they are greatly incensed at the loss of the treasure which I suppose they hoped to share. They say it will be many days before your capture is known to the White Father at Washington, and by that time they will be beyond the reach of the Great Father's soldiers."

Every word he said made me angrier. I did not believe he had uttered a word of remonstrance to the Iroquois; on the contrary, I believed our capture had been entirely at his instigation. Even in the heat of my anger, however, I was wiser than to tell him so, and at that moment it flashed into my mind that Lloyd had made his escape in order to rescue us. I do not know why I had not thought of it earlier, and I was full of remorse at my unjust bitterness toward him. I thought it might be the part of wisdom to let La Force know that there was one who was sure to send a rescue party for us.

"Who I have no doubt will not only free us but avenge our capture," I finished by saying.



We saw him seated by the spring, a huge savage
covering him with a rifle

"Ah, you refer to the 'Paleface god,' as my Iroquois friends call him, I suppose?" he asked in his suavest tones, and with his glittering smile, plainly visible now that the gray dawn was beginning to strengthen the feeble moonlight.

I was irritated beyond measure but as I started to speak he interrupted me:

"Your pardon, Sir Lionel; I have been saying to your friend, Mr. Irving, that I hope you will tell the Iroquois where you have hidden the box before they proceed to torture, for I fear I will be unable to restrain them or protect you and your party should they be exasperated by your refusal to tell."

Irving broke in before I had a chance to reply. I think he feared I might be induced by the sound of that word "torture" to betray the hiding place at once.

"And I would have answered Mr. La Force," he said quickly, "if that miserable little gag would have allowed me, that it was not for me to decide; that I did not think it was for any of us to decide, not even our leader, Sir Lionel; that it ought only to be decided in full council."

"I thank you for that word, Mr. Irving," I said gravely, and I meant my thanks. For at the thought of torture to the frail Irving, to the merry Ogden, the courtly Kemble, and the young lad Cooper, I had been ready to reveal the secret at once, if so I might spare my friends. But I saw Irving was right; it was better we should take counsel together. Therefore I said to Mr. La Force that I hoped he would arrange with his friends, the Iroquois, to allow us to hold a conference, and he replied that it might be arranged; he would see what he could do.

All this time each member of our party had been covered by either a pistol or a rifle in the hands of an alert savage; the slightest suspicious movement on the part of any one of us would have meant instant death. Mr. La Force left us for a few moments, still so guarded, ostensibly to consult the chiefs of the Iroquois. Really I think he had only to express his commands to have them executed. The consultation took some little time. In fact, I thought that I could discern that for some reason the savages were finding various pretexts for delay. Mr. La Force returned finally and said that with some difficulty he had been able to persuade the chiefs to allow us the conference; it should be held here in our own camp, and since the Iroquois understood at most a scattered word of English, the guard would remain.

There was but one voice in our council: "It was only a ruse of La Force's!" "The savages were too thoroughly in subjection to dare such a thing!" "Twenty-five years ago it might have been possible, but now they knew they would have the whole great nation down upon them at once, and their tribe would be annihilated." "Most of all, La Force knew we could not disappear without immediate investigation, since all New York knew whither we were bound and why."

A great weight was lifted from my heart — I had not wanted to surrender our dearly-won booty so tamely, but the burden of the suffering, perhaps the lives of my friends, had been greater than I could bear. Now we decided unanimously that I should tell La Force that we refused to reveal the hiding place of the chest, but we also agreed that should he proceed, or the savages under his direction, to torture us, we would make a virtue of necessity and give it up.

There was a little flicker of the eyelash when I told La Force our decision that I could not easily interpret. I had seen it before, at critical moments, but whether it meant satisfaction or disappointment I could not be sure. Aside from that flicker his face was impassive.

"Very well, Sir Lionel," he said gravely, "I shall do my best to protect you from the ingenious tortures of the savages, but I cannot promise that I will be successful. They will be very greatly incensed when I convey to them your decision, and I cannot answer for their manner of taking it. I think for the present I shall defer telling them. It would have been desirable, of course, that we should have found the chest before setting out on our journey, but we shall not give up hope of your being persuaded to tell us later, and a party of warriors can always be sent back after it. We have only been delaying for your decision to begin our march; breakfast is awaiting you at the Iroquois camp and, if you please, we will hasten thither."

And in fact whereas, up to this time, there had seemed to be a policy of delay, now all was hurry and bustle. In our conference we had wondered what would be done with us when our refusal was announced (for we declined to believe in the torture); would they carry us off with them or leave us behind? And almost more we wondered what would become of our horses. It would break my heart to lose Saladin, not to return him safe and sound to his owners, nor did I believe any savage would be able to ride him. We were soon to have an answer to our questions.

"You have two horses, Sir Lionel," Mr. La Force continued in his soft tones, "which the Indians dare not touch. Every time anyone has come near your horse it has so reared, pawed and snorted, and so viciously flung out its heels that I think my friends believe it possessed of devils. They beg, therefore, that you will, for the present at least, ride him yourself. There is also a little Indian pony that is not much better. Twice has the bravest Indian warrior mounted him only to be flung over his head. I fear my friends are not skilled in horsemanship and I think they would be quite willing that the owner of the Indian pony should ride it also. Your other horses they have found tamer and some of the chiefs have appropriated them to themselves."

All of this was said with a sardonic smile that drove me wild. Oh, for my sword in my hand and a clear field to try issues with La Force at the sword's point! So Cooper and I were to ride, and Irving, Ogden, and Kemble were to go afoot. Well the villain knew this would be harder for me to bear than to go afoot myself and see my friends ride. We were to begin our march at once, La Force had said. How was the frail Irving to endure it? Ogden and Kemble might, but I was quite sure Irving would fall by the way. Nor could I see any help for it, for even should the Indians give their permission to the exchange I was very sure Saladin would not allow Irving on his back.

"Do you hear, Jonathan?" I called to him, where he sat a few yards away. "Your horse has been taken by one of the chiefs. Will you ride Saladin?"

"Will I ride his Satanic Majesty?" Irving answered, apparently not a whit dismayed by the tidings. "No, I thank you. I believe I still have some regard left for life and limb."

I think he read my distress in my face, for he added quickly and more seriously than I had often heard him speak:

"Do not worry about me, Sir Lionel. You will find I am as tough as a pine knot. I have not the least doubt in the world that I can out-walk any two Indians."

Our camp was a little distance further south than the Iroquois camp and between it and the place where we had found the wagon. As, still under guard, we started for our horses the wagon passed us going toward the camp drawn by its one black and one white horse. What seemed a little strange to me, was that it was piled high with the branches of trees, but knowing that the Indians used these for making their huts, I supposed that since the wagon was no longer used to convey the chest, they were making use of it to carry the branches from one camp to another and so save the trouble of cutting them each night.

As I said, all now was hurry and bustle. But scant time was allowed for breakfast, and the sun was not yet risen when we were well on the march. I had begged La Force to permit my three friends to ride in the wagon, since without that heavy chest the burden for the horses would be light, but this he absolutely refused, and I had the pain of feeling myself at ease on my beautiful Saladin and Ogden, Irving, and Kemble trudging wearily along afoot.

Not that one would guess from the manner of either of them that there was anything painful or enforced or uncomfortable about this walk they were taking through the glorious October weather, a frosty tang in the air that set the blood aleaping in the veins, and hills and lake and forest a glorious blaze of color. When, as occasionally happened, they came within hailing distance of either Cooper or me, they saluted us with all manner of good-natured jibes and friendly scoffing. We were everyone of us closely guarded, but our guards spoke and understood no English and so, sometimes, under cover of scoffing, we were able to interchange small items of information or propose to each other plans of escape that were only half in jest.

The three came up with us about noon, where on the banks of a small stream we had halted to let our horses drink. It seemed to me that Irving looked pale and worn with his long morning's tramp, and I puzzled my brains in vain to find some way of securing a ride for him.

"Irving," I said, "as soon as I get hold of La Force — he is keeping out of our way purposely, I believe — I am going to get permission for you to ride Saladin. I would make the change now, but at the slightest movement of the kind on the part of either of us we would each have a bullet through us."

"Not for worlds!" he exclaimed in pretended horror. "You know my opinion of Saladin."

"But I shall walk at his head and keep him quiet with my voice."

"Oh, don't worry, Green,"— one would have thought from his tone and manner he was scornfully deriding me, but that was for the benefit of our guards —"you have me to thank for keeping the whole line of march back this morning, and they will be delayed, I promise you, even more this afternoon. At this rate Lloyd and his rescuing party can easily overtake us."

I had noticed our slow progress and our frequent stoppings with delight, but I had no idea that Irving was at the bottom of it.

"How have you managed it?" I asked wonderingly.

"I 'll tell you some other time," he answered, laughing at my look of bewilderment. "Look here, Green, what will you say if before night I am luxuriously riding in that wagon yonder."

"Say!" I echoed, "That you are either devil or angel, and sometimes I think you are both!"

"You 're right, Green; he 's both," Ogden shouted, "but I 'll tell you what, if he 's not riding in that wagon before night, he 'll be riding on my shoulders — this is entirely too much for the little fellow."

At that Irving grew furiously angry, or pretended to. He never liked to be considered a weakling, and now he declared he could walk as far as any of us and feel it no more; that if he rode in the wagon it would be for the fun of outwitting La Force, and not because he needed to.

Whereupon our guards gave us to understand it was time to be moving on, and I saw no more of either Ogden, Irving, or Kemble until the middle of the afternoon, for, try as I might, I could not keep Saladin down to the slow pace of the motley throng of squaws, children, burden-bearers and decrepit old men; and my guards — I had two of them — were kept on a dog trot to keep up with his prancing and dancing walk, the slowest pace he knew how to take.

But in the middle of the afternoon my guards signaled to me to halt my spirited horse, both that they might get a little rest and that the main line might catch up with us. We were some distance ahead of the motley throng, in the very van of which was the wagon drawn by the black horse and the white one. To my amazement as the wagon came abreast of us, there lay Irving comfortably at ease on the branches, looking pale, I thought, but giving me a triumphant wink as the wagon stopped beside me.

"Well?" I asked.

"I stepped on a loose stone and sprained my ankle," he answered soberly. "It was impossible for me to walk a step, and two of my Iroquois friends carried me for a quarter of a mile. I 'm not very heavy, fortunately, but a dead weight of a hundred and fifteen pounds sometimes seems heavier than a live one of a hundred and fifty, and I was a very dead weight. They were glad to put me in the wagon as soon as they could."

"Has your ankle been dressed?" I asked as soberly as he.

"Yes, Ogden dressed it; he's quite a skillful surgeon. I should n't wonder if the swelling would be all gone by to-night or to-morrow."

Of course I supposed he was shamming, but I could not be quite sure of it and I felt some concern. One thing I noticed, that since Irving rode in the wagon we made much better progress. There were no more delays and stoppages and I think by the time night fell and we were ready for camp, we must have made fully twenty or thirty miles. It was wonderful that the little children could walk so far, but I noticed the mothers often carrying them pick-a-back (never the fathers) and so resting their tired little legs. How the women bore it was still more incomprehensible to me, for they carried all the camp equipage, except what was carried in the wagon, besides their papooses and younger children. The men carried nothing but their rifles, with a glittering tomahawk and scalping-knife in the belt.

Our way had been through a beautiful country and much of it apparently well settled, though as far as was possible we kept in the woods. Cooper said it was evident from our direction that we were making straight for Canada by way of the Adirondack forests and mountains. So beautiful was the country through which we rode I could have enjoyed it vastly had it been a pleasure jaunt we were taking, but as it was, with the uncertainty of our fate before us, and the certainty, to my mind, that Irving never could endure the long tramp to Canada (nor did I believe he could succeed in keeping up his ruse of a sprained ankle for any great length of time) it was a gloomy ride indeed, and I welcomed the approach of the camping hour, feeling that, at least for a few hours, we would not be hastening farther and farther from all hopes of succor. Even if Lloyd should succeed in organizing a party of rescue, I had no hope of his accomplishing this for some days, and if we made as good progress every day as we had made the first day of our march, we might easily be over the Canadian border and beyond the hope of rescue before he could reach us.

What happened that first night still seems to me as incredible, as supernatural, almost, as it seemed to me then. Lying on the bare ground, a blanket for our bed, our saddlebags for pillows, the leafy canopy of the forest for our tent, in a circle about us a double row of guards sleeping on their rifles, knives and tomahawks ready to their hands, and never a sword or a pistol on any one of the five of us, I would have thought only an angel from heaven could have rescued us. And very nearly an angel from heaven has Lloyd always seemed to me since.

"Sir Lionel," whispered Cooper, close in my ear, "if we are to make any attempt at escape to-night is our best chance."

"Why do you think so?" I whispered back.

"I overheard a conference between La Force and the chiefs. To-morrow all the younger braves are to hurry forward with the prisoners to the Canadian line, leaving the women and children to the care of a few old warriors. Moreover, since they believe it is too soon to fear any pursuit, and the guards are to have a hard march to-morrow, they are to be allowed to sleep on their arms to-night. Shall we attempt an escape?"

"How do they dare permit them to sleep on their arms?"

"The Iroquois brave is a light sleeper when he is on the war path; the slightest sound will rouse him, and his instructions are to shoot or tomahawk the first prisoner who makes a suspicious movement."

Conveying Cooper's information to each of the five as we lay on the ground together, in low murmurs we discussed the advisability of attempting the escape, since on the morrow we were to be hurried out of reach of our friends. If we had had our pistols or our swords we would have ventured it, but after a long and anxious discussion we gave it up as too hazardous, since we were to be shot at the first suspicious movement.

The matter once decided we rolled ourselves in our blankets and I, for one, was deep in slumber in a moment. I slept heavily and for how long I had no means of judging, when I was roused by a hand over my mouth and a muffled voice in my ear: "Come! Be quick! Not a sound!"

I did not recognize the voice and I was not sure whether it was a summons to instant execution or a friendly call to flight, but I did not hesitate a moment. My heart pounding in my throat I was on my feet before my eyes were well open.

"Stand where you are a moment," the voice muttered in my ear, and rigid as one of the pines with which the hills about us were covered I stood and hardly dared to breathe.

I think I had never seen a night so dark. Whether the moon had not yet risen, or whether it was obscured by clouds, I could not tell, but not a ray of light from any source penetrated the leafy canopy above us. I thought I could detect muffled and mysterious sounds all about me, but they were so slight and so uncertain I could not be sure but they were the creation of my excited fancy. In a moment my left hand was seized and put into the right of a third person — I believed I recognized Irving's slender palm and clinging fingers — and with a whispered, "Hold fast to him!" my free right hand was once more grasped by this mysterious owner of the voice and I was drawn gently and silently forward, pulling Irving, and I believed, in a linked chain, Ogden, Kemble and Cooper after me. If there were six of us in that line, surely never did six men tread so silently before. And where were our guards? We did not stumble over them, as I should have supposed we would in the dark, and there was no sound of life from any of them.

It seemed a long time to me that we were thus stealthily creeping through the blackness, with infinite slowness and with frequent stoppings, as if some one in the lead halted often to make sure of his way. Expecting every moment that the camp would be aroused and the savages upon us, I would have liked to move more rapidly. I confess there was not a step of the way that I did not feel a bullet between my shoulders or a tomahawk cleaving my skull. It seemed to me it would have been wiser to run, silently as possible, but at top speed, in any direction away from the camp, and not to stop running until we felt ourselves at a safe distance where we might lie in hiding until the morning.

But the one in command had other plans and I was not sorry when I suddenly found myself descending into the little hollow or glade where we had tethered our horses. I had not for a moment supposed that we could take them with us; it was risk enough to get ourselves off alive. Now as I felt Saladin's warm breath in my face, and his soft nose rubbing my cheek in response to my quiet word to him, it seemed to me that all our troubles were over. To be sure, we had left our saddles behind us, but the bridles were hanging on a near-by limb, and in a moment I had secured them and handed one to Cooper.

"We could find but two horses," the mysterious voice whispered in my ear. "Where are the others?"

"On the other side of the camp with the wagon horses," I answered. "Ogden shall ride with me and Irving with Cooper. Can you take Kemble?"

There was a muttered response of "All right" and it was but the work of a moment to adjust our bridles and mount as I had suggested. And now, my eyes having grown more accustomed to the light, or the moon beginning to rise, I saw that there were three other horsemen besides ourselves silently leading the way out of the little glade into the woodland road by which we had reached our camp; two were Huron braves and one, as I had been very sure from the first, was Lloyd on Bourbon.

Silently, without a word, and slowly, that our horses might make no noise, we rode for more than a mile, and it was the most irksome ride, the most interminable mile, that I have ever ridden. Suddenly, coming upon an open bit of road, those in the lead put spurs to their horses, and Saladin and Bourbon and Natty Bumpo — for so Cooper called his little Indian pony after the old trapper he had loved as a lad — needed no spurs as they dashed madly after them.

Oh, that glorious ride through the cool night air tingling with frost! Free! Neither fear of torture nor sudden bullet, nor gleaming tomahawk! I did not realize how despair had settled down upon me like a leaden pall, until I felt the keen elation of the lifted load, the exquisite joy of life and hope renewed. The ringing of hoofs on the rocky road was the sweetest music that had ever ravished my ears. Not a word was spoken through that mad ride, nor did we draw rein until we had put nearly half the distance back to the Huron camp between us and the Iroquois. Then we pulled up to breathe our horses, though neither Bourbon nor Saladin seemed to have felt their mad pace or their double burden.

Not until, at a signal from the leader, we had drawn up by the roadside had I exchanged a word with Lloyd. Then he rode up by my side and no brother's grasp of my hand could have been closer or warmer.

"But how did you manage it?" I asked, and we gathered close around him to hear his story, after we had expressed our thanks to the two Huron braves, who stood silently by uttering an occasional "Ugh!" of appreciation as Lloyd told his tale.

"If it had not been for these young braves I could never have managed it," he began. "My first thought was to get a company of soldiers from the nearest post and in a pitched battle with the Iroquois recapture you. But the Hurons assured me that the nearest post was so distant that the Iroquois would be over the border before we could possibly overtake them. Then I asked if their tribe would be willing to go on the war-path, but they were very sure their chief would never listen to it; the Hurons had no quarrel with the Iroquois just now; the wampum belt was stretched between the tribes. But they said they could manage to get you off. They had followed the Iroquois trail for a little distance in the early morning and they had seen who were guarding the prisoners. Two of them were well known to the young Hurons — they had often smoked the pipe of peace together, and they believed that they could come upon them in the night and, by means of bribes, persuade them to allow their prisoners to escape. It was not likely they had any ill feeling toward the young Palefaces, only the 'Devil-eyes' had probably offered them gold. They were sure that a little gold, a little firewater and a little tobacco would set the prisoners free.

"So I rode back to Cooperstown, secured two horses for the

Huron braves (and by the way, Cooper, I said not a word to your family, only left a note to be delivered in three days to your father if we were not heard from by that time), and besides the horses I secured three big flasks of whisky, a lot of tobacco, and filled my pockets with gold coins by changing some notes at a little country store. You made very slow progress, for you had many hours the start of us, and we came up with you before sunset, or so nearly, we had to keep back out of your sight in the woods."

"That was Irving," I interrupted. "He kept back the march, under one pretext and another, all day long. His last ruse was a sprained ankle. By the way, how is your ankle, Irving?"

"Fine, thank you. Never better," he answered.

"We have Irving to thank, then," said Lloyd; "for by overtaking you so early, my two Hurons were able, as soon as it was dark, to spy out the land in their noiseless fashion. They discovered exactly where you lay, and where your horses were tethered, and had bribed your guards to keep quiet when they should come for you. I have no doubt the guards will be found out and punished, but at present they are probably gloriously happy in secretly passing the fire-water from one to the other, jingling their gold coins and fingering their tobacco. It was necessary to wait until the camp was well asleep before we came for you, and so it was nearly midnight when I roused you."

"Lloyd," I said earnestly, "I can never be sufficiently thankful that you were with us on this march. I would never have known how to carry through such an enterprise as you have done it."

"It does seem rather providential that one of us was able to escape," he answered modestly, "but anyone else would have done as well as I; it is to the brave Hurons the credit belongs."

Whereupon we thanked the young Hurons again, and each of us left some gold coins in the hand we grasped in friendship; and a battered old moon being by this time well up over the crest of the hills, we could plainly see the glitter in their eyes, which I think is an Indian's nearest approach to a smile.

We bade the Hurons good-by as we drew near their camp, and since they had no longer any need of their horses, they were handed over to Ogden and Kemble, and I took Irving up with me to relieve the little pony, and the day brightening rapidly to dawn and sunrise, we rode on to Cooperstown. It proved to be a little village, beautiful for situation, nestling among high hills at the foot of the lake. The village itself was principally built on both sides of a broad street running back from the lake to a lofty fir-crowned hill, many of the houses making some pretense to architectural beauty, many of them, of course, as is bound to be in so new a village, not twenty years old, rude and plain and ugly.

At the head of the street, just below the dark-browed hill, was the home of Cooper. It was somewhat after the style of a manor-house in my own country, of generous dimensions and of many styles of architecture. A rustic bridge, crossing a sparkling mountain stream, gave entrance to the grounds where stately trees, the elm, the maple, and the poplar (of which I had seen so many in New York and which I understood had lately been imported into the country) were scattered over the wide lawns, and with their scarlet and gold against the dark background of the fir-clad hill made a brilliant setting for the mansion. We had all the cordial welcome and generous entertainment Cooper had led us to expect, and since we had been now for two nights without sleep, with many arduous days and nights preceding, we were glad to avail ourselves of the pressing invitation to remain and rest ourselves and our horses. Indeed, had we not been so eager to secure our treasure-chest and bear it back in triumph to Mayor Livingston, we could have enjoyed much longer the hospitality so cordially urged upon us and that we found so delightful.

But we were eager to finish the work we felt was so well begun, and early the next morning, after a long night of deep and refreshing slumber, with a wagon drawn by two stout horses, and carrying four men to handle the chest for us, we six, men and horses refreshed in body and spirit, started gayly up the lake. We took a road this time on the eastern side and back among the hills, since the cliffs rose straight from the waters on this eastern shore, and as we rode we had much to say of our experiences of the last few days.

"Well, Sir Lionel," Kemble asked, "has the new world proved what you expected of it? Is it exciting enough?"

"More so than I expected," I answered, "but I believe I have enjoyed the excitement, now it is all over."

"I'll tell you, Green," said Ogden, "I'm going to write your father a certificate when I get back to New York, that the masterly manner in which you have conducted this expedition, restoring the city's money to its coffers and bringing back your company in safety, qualifies you for the command of any expedition against Bonaparte."

"Wait till the money is safe in the city's coffers," I answered laughingly. "'There's many a slip,' you know."

"Yes," said Irving soberly, "and I want to tell you something, Sir Lionel, that has been haunting me ever since I sprained my ankle and rode in the wagon."

"Speak on, Jonathan," I encouraged him, expecting nothing more than one of his usual jests.

"I can't get rid of the impression," he went on, still soberly, "that the chest was in that wagon. Certainly when the wagon jolted over the stones it jolted as if it was loaded with something much heavier than light branches, and I almost imagined I could feel the outlines of the chest beneath the boughs as I lay on them."

We all jeered at his suspicions, but I believe I was not the only one who felt a little uneasiness, and I was glad when we came to our old camp and leaving the horses with Kemble, Ogden, Irving and Cooper, Lloyd and I and the four men started on our climb up to Natty Bumpo's cave.

The sun was shining brilliantly, but the cave lay in shadow. As it came in view we all peered into it eagerly, but we could see nothing. A sort of vague fear held us back for a moment from entering, then I stepped forward.

"Come on," I said to Lloyd, and stooping down, side by side, we two passed under the low entrance arch. We were blinded for a moment by coming into the dark from the brilliant sunshine, and we could see nothing, but with extended hands we groped our way to the back of the cave where we had left the chest.

"Lloyd," I said, and I almost pitied the sound of my own voice, it was so dull and lifeless, like one lost in despair, "Lloyd, it is all to do over again! This is what their delay in starting meant. They waited to get the chest back in their wagon and covered with branches, before they were ready to start."

"And La Force watched us toiling up the hill with that heavy chest and was laughing at us all the time," said Lloyd, and his voice was the restrained voice of a very angry man striving to keep calm.

It was long years after, on the field of Waterloo, that I came face to face with La Force again, for the last time. But his face was upturned to the stars, and there was no light in the white-rimmed, black-lashed eyes. He had died for his emperor, and gallantly, for he lay in that dreadful trench, the sunken road of Obain on Mount St. Jean, where the flower of the Old Guard laid down their lives.

"He was no coward," I murmured to myself. "*Multum peccavit; requiescat in pace!* And may God have mercy on his soul!"

XXVI

BEHIND A CLOSED DOOR

I HAD no thought, at first, but that I would at once get together a company of men, follow the Iroquois and recapture the treasure. And I think this time I would have had no scruples about La Force. With the greatest pleasure in life I would carry him back to occupy my cell in the Bridewell, and I did not believe even Miss Desloge would blame me for my lack of mercy.

But I was dissuaded from my purpose by the other five. The Iroquois had the start of us by the day and night we had spent at Cooper's house, and by our own night's flight in the opposite direction, and it was not probable that they would be in any the less haste to hurry the treasure-chest over the border, now that they knew we must have discovered it was in their possession. Moreover, there was no way of getting together a company of men fit to attack so warlike a tribe as the Iroquois. If a military post had been within reach that would furnish us trained soldiers, it would be worth while undertaking it; but as it was, every one of my friends counseled giving up the treasure for lost. It was hard to bring my mind to giving it up finally, and I am afraid my reluctance was as much mortification at the thought that I had been outwitted by La Force as sorrow on Mayor Livingston's account.

We decided not to return through the Shawangunk Mountains, but by the Mohawk Valley to Albany and so down the Hudson. Part of our course would be on the trail of the Iroquois and I still had some lingering hopes that we might overtake them and by some lucky chance get possession once more of the chest. I was eager to be on our way, therefore, and sending back the four men with the wagon, we continued on our northward course, diverging somewhat to the east, and by noon we had reached Cherry Valley, a picturesque little village which Lloyd said had been the scene of one of the terrible Indian massacres during the war of the Revolution. Lloyd also told us that it was in the woods just back of this village that he and his Hurons had rescued us from the Iroquois. If we had covered as much distance in the few morning hours as it had taken the Iroquois all day to march, I had good hopes of overtaking them — though what we six men could do against the whole tribe I was not ready to decide — and so, allowing the scantiest time for refreshment of man and beast, I gave the order for the forward march.

By night we had reached the beautiful Mohawk river and spent the night at an inn in a little village on its bank. Everywhere along our route we inquired for the Iroquois. They had avoided the settlements, as was natural, but always we came upon some farmer lad, or village urchin, who had been playing truant from school, and had watched from a safe distance the passing of the Indians. We soon learned, also, that they had followed the plan Cooper had overheard them discussing — the young warriors, with a wagon and horses, were in advance, the women, children and old men in the rear — and the first party was six hours in advance by the time they had reached the forests back of Canajoharie, the village where we spent our first night.

We were in the saddle next morning at the earliest dawn, following the river eastward, as far as Amsterdam, a quaint little Dutch village, where we spent the night and where we learned the braves with the treasure-chest were fifteen hours in advance of the women and children when they crossed the river at this point; they were moving with incredible speed for men on foot.

We followed them across the river the next morning before daylight and pushing on as rapidly as we dared, out of consideration for our hard-worked horses, we reached Saratoga Springs before night. There we were compelled to give up the pursuit. We had gained a little on them, but it was fully thirty hours since the advance party had passed through the Saratoga forests and they were now well in the network of mountains and lakes to the north, where no party of white men could follow them with safety, since there were such opportunities for ambuscade — a method of warfare the Indians excel in — and such necessity of navigation and portage, with no chance of securing food for man or beast, as would make the difficulties insurmountable for a party like ours entirely unequipped for such a journey.

Since we were compelled to relinquish the idea of pursuit there was no longer any reason for hurry and we settled down for a day's rest in the pretty little resort. Irving told me that it was as gay, in its way, as Bath or Tunbridge Wells in the season, that the Hamiltons, the DeLanceys, the Van Rensselaers, the Schuylers, the Livingstons, all the élite of New York and the Hudson, came there each season to drink the waters for a few weeks. It seemed to me so in the heart of the wilderness, for we had ridden through many miles of forest to reach it, that I could hardly credit his tale, yet after we had rested a day and drunk the nauseous waters from every well, and walked out in the late afternoon to view the battle-ground and the ruins of General Schuyler's fine villa, burned by Burgoyne, and spent a second night in such slumber as one only knows in these high altitudes and in an air fragrant with balsam and fir, I found we were not so far in the wilderness as I supposed. A short day's ride brought us to Albany, and meeting General Schuyler on the streets he haled us off to his hospitable house, as if it were a matter of course that he should entertain Kemble and Ogden, who were old acquaintances, and any friends of theirs they might happen to have with them.

When he found I was the "criminal" in the Livingston case, a full account of which he had had from the letters of his daughter, Mrs. Hamilton, and from the New York papers, he was full of the liveliest interest in the case, and in our expedition in pursuit of La Force. He would have sent us down the river in his sloop, if we would have let him, as much, I believe, to prove his indignation against La Force as his friendliness for us. Since he could do nothing more for us than give us supper and breakfast and a night's lodging, he did it with a courtliness that I liked exceedingly. If the fine old soldier had been a great duke in my own land, he could not have worn a grander manner nor shown us a more princely hospitality.

It was late in the afternoon, just two weeks as I said, from the day we left New York when we rode up under the Clermont maples. It was Kemble who insisted we should stop there; I think I would rather not, since I was not coming back a conquering hero, but an outwitted simpleton — or so I called myself. Neither was I at all sure that the family we had left in New York had returned to Clermont. But Kemble insisted it would do no harm to stop and find out. If they were not there we could ride back to the thriving little city of Hudson and spend the night, but if they were at home they would be most anxious to know the result of our expedition and had a right to the first news.

The day was soft and warm, like a day in late summer, with a purple haze veiling the distant hills. Irving called it an Indian summer day, though Indian summer was not due, he said, until November. It was nothing remarkable, therefore, since the day was so fine, that Miss Livingston and her uncle and Miss Desloge should be seated on the broad veranda overlooking the river, and the distant Catskills. Yet as I caught sight of them my heart pounded like a trip-hammer, as if no sight in the world could have been more sudden or unexpected. Moreover, I felt myself in no fit trim to be presented to ladies. Up in that guest chamber on the second landing, that had been mine before I went down to New York on my fatal visit, I had left at least two suits, one of black satin and one of fine blue broadcloth, and a whole drawer full of fresh linen; if I could only slip in by some back way and rearray myself before I met the ladies! But there was no chance for it; I must ride boldly forward with the others, who seemed to pay no thought to their travel-stained appearance.

When we first came in sight of the group on the veranda they were so absorbed in a letter Miss Livingston was reading aloud that none of the three noticed us for a full minute. It was Miss Desloge who looked up first, and as she recognized us she sprang to her feet with her hands clasped tightly to her breast. I was not sure whether her excitement was caused by joy at our return in safety, or by fear of the tidings of La Force we might be bringing. The other two saw us almost as soon as Miss Desloge and welcomed us with waving hands and joyous shouts; they evidently felt none of the strain under which Miss Desloge seemed to be laboring. Yet she had recovered control of herself by the time we rode up to the steps, and had a pretty word of welcome for each one of us, which if not so heartily or so noisily cordial as Miss Livingston's I hoped was as sincere.

"Did you get the money?" was Miss Livingston's first word after the welcomes were over, and almost in the same breath Mayor Livingston asked:

"Where is La Force?"

"Sir Lionel is captain; ask him," said Irving.

"We have come back empty-handed, Mayor Livingston," I said, but it cost me an effort to keep a firm upper lip, and no effort could keep back the telltale color. "It is a long story," I added quickly, seeing that Mr. Livingston was on the point of saying something sympathetic. "Mr. Irving is a better story-teller than I; I will let him tell it."

"Yes, let me tell it, do," said Irving, with an eagerness I understood later. But Miss Livingston interrupted:

"It 's almost dinner time, Uncle Edward," she said, "would n't it be better to defer the recital till then? And in the meantime can't you furnish these young gentlemen with some dinner toilets?"

Whereupon the mayor carried us off to our rooms and left us to make ourselves fresh and comfortable in such garments as his wardrobe and mine afforded. Ogden, Cooper and Kemble managed very well in the mayor's clothes. Irving, being just of my size, donned my blue broadcloth with a buff waistcoat, while I got into my black satins. I was rather glad Irving chose the blue, for I had always liked my black satins, and I was contemplating myself in the mirror with some satisfaction, hoping I might look well to Mademoiselle, when Ogden spoiled it all. He also had been admiring himself in the mirror when turning away he caught sight of me.

"Ye gods, what a picture!" he ejaculated. "Black satin coat and small clothes! white satin waistcoat, white silk stockings! Cluny lace ruffles and tie! chestnut curls and shining gray eyes! Oh, for a Kneller or Sir Joshua! Gentlemen, there 's no chance for the rest of us!"

And there was no stopping his chaffing until I threatened to tear off my black satins, jump into my riding breeches and give him the thrashing of his life. He saw I was in earnest and Ogden was too good-natured to want to make anyone really angry, so he let up with an apology and a parting shot:

"I meant what I said, you know; you *are* as handsome as a picture."

There had been some difficulty in finding anything big enough for Lloyd to wear, but he finally squeezed into an old court suit of Mr. Robert Livingston's, very gorgeous indeed if it had only fitted him. But nothing could ever make that giant look ridiculous, and with wrist ruffles half way to his elbows, his waist line a good inch too high, and every shoulder seam starting with the strain on it, the white satin turned to deep ivory with age, and the glittering gold lace much tarnished, he still looked like a Greek god, and I was sure neither Miss Livingston nor Mademoiselle would have a glance for anyone else when he was by.

We had spent a good hour over our toilets, scrubbing and brushing, and those of us who had clothes to fit helping to cover up the deficiencies of those who did not, so that the sun had set as we came down the broad staircase together, three abreast, and found the ladies and Mr. Livingston waiting for us in the great hall brilliantly lighted with wax tapers. The day had been warm, but the evening was turning cool, and a fresh fire was leaping and blazing in the wide chimney, while through glass doors we saw the table ready set for dinner in the famous orangery. The ladies had made dinner toilets also. I am not sure that they had spent as much time on them as we men had spent, but one was dazzling in rich brocade and sparkling diamonds and flashing black eyes and glossy curls of the hue of the raven's wing, and the other was bewitching in pale rose and silver, the creamy white of her skin just tinted with the faintest rose, her wonderful hair lying in soft tendrils on the white brow and clustering in rich curls about the snowy throat, and the glorious eyes glowing with excitement.

Miss Livingston made us a stately courtesy as we drew up in a semicircle before her.

"Your servant, my lords—your grandeur overpowers me. Would that I had six fair dames to properly entertain six knights of such high degree." And then sharply to Miss Desloge, before any one of us had time to respond, "See Mademoiselle, that you do your best to make yourself charming to these gentlemen. Sir Lionel, you and your friend shall take me out to dinner, Mr. Irving and Mr. Cooper may look after Miss Desloge, and Mr. Ogden and Mr. Kemble shall play staff officers to the mayor."

Neither Kemble nor I was pleased with this arrangement, nor am I sure that anyone was greatly delighted except Cooper and Irving, who sprang with alacrity to offer each an arm to Mademoiselle. I had hoped I might sit beside her and perhaps have an occasional word with her that no other ear should hear, but very likely there would have been no chance for that even had I been beside her, for we were hardly well seated before Mayor Livingston said, "And now, Irving, for your tale," and there was no other topic of conversation through the dinner; all of us joining in at times to correct or enlarge on some point, and Mayor Livingston and the ladies asking innumerable questions.

And after all it was better to be opposite Mademoiselle than beside her through Irving's tale; every swift change of emotion was mirrored in her face as he waxed eloquent in the telling. I thought he made our adventures a little more thrilling than they really were; our escapades more hairbreadth, and, what pleased me even less, he made me the hero of every specially daring venture, the skillful contriver of every successful plan, the wise councilor in every emergency. It irritated me no little and compelled me at times to break in with disclaimers or corrections. But none of the others seemed to mind — they were a generous lot of young fellows; I believe they were vying with each other to pile up the credit for me because they knew there was someone present in whose eyes I would like to shine.

I sometimes thought I caught a message from Mademoiselle's eyes to mine —" I am proud of you "— but I hardly dared believe what I so much longed to believe. Certainly her eyes were beaming, her whole countenance was glowing with interest in Irving's story. There were times, however, when he spoke of La Force — and Irving did not spare him; he painted his falseness and his cunning in the strongest colors — at such times Mademoiselle's eyes dropped, a painful color mounted even to the waves of her hair, and once I caught a sudden quiver of her little chin. I wished Irving would let La Force alone or gloss him over as best he could. But Irving did not seem to notice her embarrassment or her suffering — I could not be sure which it was — and dilated with relish on La Force's baseness and the pleasure it would be to any one of us to some day give him his deserts.

After dinner, around the crackling hickory logs the talk gradually turned to other topics. Suddenly Miss Livingston spoke up sharply:

" Mademoiselle, where is my letter? "

" I do not know, Miss Livingston," Miss Desloge answered timidly.

" I must have dropped it in the excitement of the arrivals. Go out on the veranda and look for it," she ordered curtly.

Now I never could endure that way Miss Livingston had of speaking to Miss Desloge as to a menial, and I wondered that a high-spirited young woman, such as Miss Desloge had proved herself to be on more than one occasion, could submit to it. Until this moment I had seen nothing of it in Miss Livingston's manner since our return, and I had been hoping she had reformed in that particular. Now, as Miss Desloge rose to her feet with heightened color, I too sprang to my feet.

"I will look for your letter, Miss Livingston," I said.

I had not intended to speak haughtily, but her bullying manner, I could call it nothing else, to Miss Desloge, irritated me beyond measure, and I fear that is the way my words sounded.

"As you please," said Miss Livingston carelessly, "and Mademoiselle may go also; two pairs of eyes will be better than one."

Out on the veranda we saw the letter at once lying on the floor by the chair where Miss Livingston had been sitting. We both stooped to get it at the same moment and our hands touched on the letter. Miss Desloge hastily withdrew hers and sprang aside, for our faces too had almost touched. But I seized her hand and held it for a moment.

"Mademoiselle," I said, "why do you submit to be spoken to as Miss Livingston speaks to you?"

She did not draw away her hand, as I had expected her to, and I felt it tremble in my clasp as she answered:

"Oh, do not think too hardly of Miss Livingston. I do not believe she means it as it sounds; at heart she is very kind."

"I do not believe any woman with a kind heart could so speak to a — a — dependent," I stammered, for I knew not what to call her when I came to give a name to the position she held.

"I suppose it is a habit acquired by speaking to slaves and she is not conscious of it," said Miss Desloge deprecatingly.

"That is just it," I returned angrily. "She treats you as a slave, and I will not stand it. I will not stay in Miss Livingston's house and tamely submit to seeing you so insulted."

"Do not speak so," Mademoiselle begged. "I am sure she intends no insult, and if I am to earn my bread by being in the position I am, then I must accept some things that are disagreeable."

Her words only roused me to greater indignation.

"Oh, why will you submit to it?" I exclaimed. "Come with me to the Manse in the little village of Clermont and give me the right to protect you forever from such insults."

Not until then did she take away her hand. She drew herself up proudly as she spoke.

"What! without your father's knowledge or consent? Never!" she exclaimed.

"Miss Desloge," I said earnestly, "I believe if my father knew the condition of affairs, knew to what you are subjected, he would be the first to think I had acted wrongly if I had not rescued you from it. Will you come with me?"

But she only shook her head sadly, but so firmly, any argument seemed hopeless.

"You say you will not marry me without my father's consent," I said, catching at a straw; "will you marry me if I gain it?"

But she shook her head again.

"Do not ask me to tell you again, what I have twice told you before," she answered gently. "And, more, when I marry I will be married in my own country and in my own church. I will not marry in this foreign land."

I was silent, but I suppose my look of despair touched her heart.

"You must not think I suffer so greatly, Sir Lionel," she added, looking up at me with a winning look of pleading. The light streaming through the hall windows made the veranda quite light and suddenly I saw that twinkle dance into her eyes, as she went on. "You must not think Miss Livingston is always so disagreeable to me; she is often very nice, and sometimes I think it is only when you are present that she speaks to me so curtly."

The twinkle could have but one interpretation: Miss Desloge believed, as I had sometimes believed, that Miss Livingston was trying to discredit her in my eyes that she might have the better chance to win my favor for herself. She was certainly going about it in a strange way.

I was terribly embarrassed by Miss Desloge's speech; I could not appear to understand it, and I hardly knew what reply to make.

"Miss Desloge," I said, "if my presence adds one feather-weight to the load of ignominy Miss Livingston heaps upon you, I will not remain another day under her roof. I will see her and tell her so."

"Oh, you will not go to-night, I hope," she said quickly.

"No, I will wait until the morning," I answered, "when I can make an occasion to see her alone."

"And you will not make a scene?" she entreated. And yet, somehow, there was something in her voice, or manner, that made me feel she would not greatly object if I did make a scene.

"I will not promise," I answered, and had much more on my tongue's end to say, but at some slight sound from the hall, conveyed to our ears through the closed doors, Miss Desloge started guiltily and spoke quickly:

"Oh, how long we have been out here! What will Miss Livingston think! Come, we must go in at once."

As we entered the hall, Miss Desloge ahead and bearing the letter, I behind trying to make my countenance absolutely impassive, Miss Livingston spoke up sharply, extending her hand for the letter as she spoke:

"Well, here you are at last! You must have been all over the manor looking for that letter. The wind had blown it away, I suppose."

And giving us no chance to assent or deny, for which I was devoutly thankful and so, I suppose, was Mademoiselle, she began at once to read it aloud.

It was from her father in Paris, and all about a young Mr. Fulton with whom he had been engaged in making some trials on the Seine of propelling a boat by steam. The last trial had been successful, and Mr. Livingston was extremely enthusiastic over it. He was going to bring Mr. Fulton home with him, and they would make more extensive trials on the Hudson; and the first steamboat that ran from New York to Albany should be called the Clermont, and his daughter should ride in it.

The letter gave rise to enthusiastic discussions around the blazing fire. Some thought it was all foolishness, it could never be of any practical use; others were not so sure, and Lloyd said simply:

"I have never been much interested in science, but the men who are can certainly do wonderful things; sometimes I almost think they work them by black art. I spent last winter in St. Louis with a man who did many strange things. He made little sticks that would burst into flame by simply scratching them on some hard substances, and he put quicksilver into little glass bottles and it told how hot it was, or whether it was going to rain or snow. For my part," he concluded soberly, "I shall not be astonished at what any man does, since I have lived with Dr. Saugrain."

"But did you never meet Mr. Fulton in Paris?" Miss Livingston asked.

"Mr. Fulton?" Lloyd stopped to think a moment, as was his habit. "Had he very wonderful dark eyes and curling chestnut hair? I met a Mr. Fulton in whom your father was greatly interested, but I thought he was an artist."

"So he was," said Miss Livingston, "and a very good one, I believe, until he got this bee in his bonnet."

I was too full of my own thoughts and in too desperate a mood to be much interested in this talk about a Mr. Fulton of whom I never expected to hear again. I was not one of those who believed his inventions would ever come to anything and I thought Mr. Livingston was squandering his money very foolishly, for I knew such experiments must be exceeding costly. But I was not in a state of mind to care what any Livingston did just now; the whole family were involved, in my mind, in the odium I bore Miss Livingston. I was desperately tired and thoroughly miserable; I wished someone would make a move towards bed. As if in answer to my wish, Miss Livingston spoke:

"Sir Lionel, I think you and your friends must be suffering from the fatigues of your adventures. Mademoiselle and I will withdraw, and you can smoke or to bed, as you will."

This was a most considerate speech and most gently spoken. Miss Livingston in this mood was always charming. It was in my heart to like her greatly if she would only show more consideration for Mademoiselle. I sprang up with alacrity to light the bedroom candles, standing on a table in the hall, but Mayor Livingston was ahead of me. He had one already lighted and was handing it to Mademoiselle as I came up, and I heard him say:

"I am leaving very early in the morning, Miss Desloge; since you will not come with me to New York, I hope you will be up in time to bid me good-by."

So he *was* interested in her. I had always thought so, now I was sure of it. I would not listen to her reply, but as I handed a candlestick to Miss Livingston I bowed formally, and said to her in a manner purposely cold and distant:

"I think, madam, it will be necessary for me to accompany Mayor Livingston to New York in the morning; may I have the honor of an interview with you before I go?"

"Certainly, sir," she said, "though I had hoped you and your friends would honor my poor house with a longer stay."

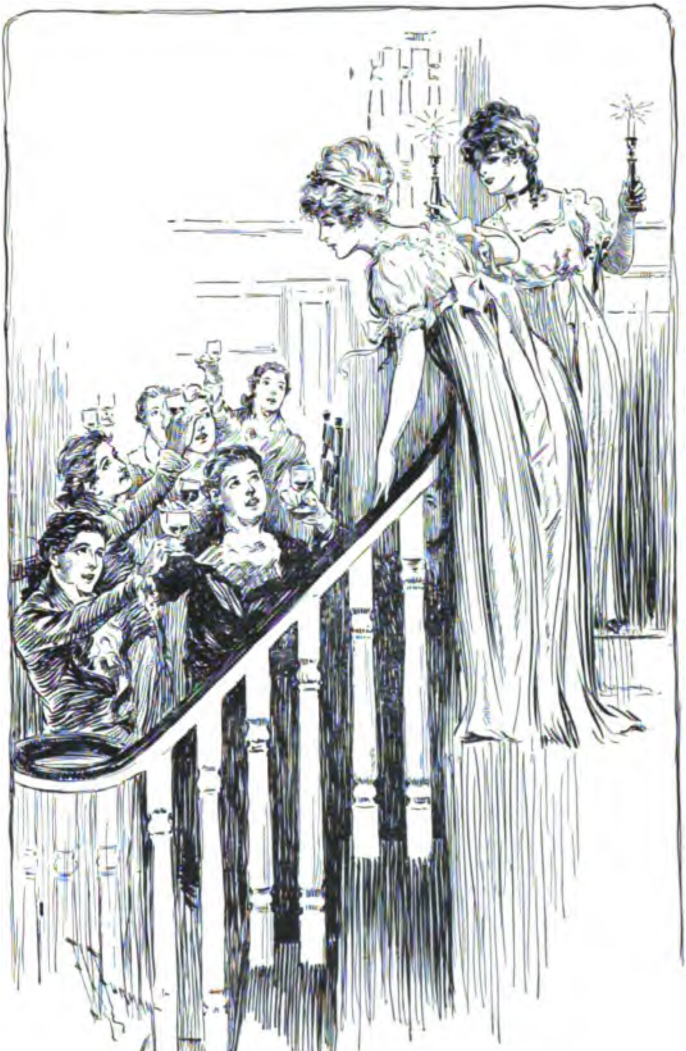
I only bowed in reply and the two maidens mounted the great staircase, each bearing a lighted taper in a massive silver candlestick, and each graceful head turned over the shoulder to catch the last good-nights from the seven men drawn up at the foot of the staircase bowing and smiling in response to the smiles of the maidens. I thought it a wonderfully pretty picture.

As they reached the landing and turned toward the next flight, Irving snatched a glass from a stand nearby, which held the after-dinner wine we had been taking together, around the fire, as is the pleasant custom in some American country-houses, raised it high above his head, and in his musical tenor broke into song:

"Here 's to the maiden of bashful fifteen,
Here 's to the widow of fifty," etc.

Every man followed his example and at the ringing chorus:

"Let the toast pass,
Drink to the lass,
I warrant she 'll prove an excuse for the glass."



"Let the toast pass"

the ladies on the landing curtsied low. As they rose from the curtsy their eyes swept the phalanx of men below ringing out the chorus with lifted glasses, and for each man each maiden had a smile. But Mademoiselle's eyes rested on mine last, and as they lingered a moment I thought there was something better than a smile in her eyes for me.

A half hour I stayed downstairs with the men, and then, as an excuse for withdrawing, I said I must be up early in the morning, as I was to start for New York with the mayor.

"Then I go with you," said Lloyd, "for I must hasten home."

The others tried to persuade us to remain over for a few days.

"Kemble 's not able to travel any farther, he 's so worn out with his adventures," said Irving with a sly wink at me, "and surely you 'll not desert him."

But nothing could turn me from my purpose.

"I 'll see you in New York," I said, "and we 'll talk it over together. '*Forsitan et haec olim,*' you know." And they were compelled to give up trying to persuade me.

Going through the corridor to our room, which Lloyd and I were to occupy together, we heard the sound of laughter and merry voices from behind a closed door, and just as we passed the door I heard Miss Livingston's high, clear voice say, "Oh, I would n't miss it for anything!"

There was another gurgle of half-suppressed laughter and then I heard Miss Desloge's voice, always low-pitched, but its tones sounded to me regretful or pathetic, as if she might be saying, "Poor fellow!"

I had an uncomfortable feeling about that little speech of Miss Livingston's and the laughter that followed and Miss Desloge's compassionate tones, and yet I knew not why; I had no reason for supposing they had anything to do with me.

XXVII

THE LETTER R

I HAD my interview with Miss Livingston the next morning — it was brief, but I hoped it was to the point.

"Miss Livingston," I began, "I must first thank you for your courtesy to a stranger. You have made me feel always that I was entirely welcome, and Clermont has proved more of a home to me than I had expected to find in America."

She made some polite rejoinder and I hurried on:

"But while you have been most courteous to me, I have found it hard to endure that you should treat an estimable young lady under your roof with such marked discourtesy."

Her face flamed scarlet.

"Marked discourtesy!" she echoed. "Sir Lionel, I think our acquaintance hardly warrants your using such words to me. I know not what right you have to criticise my manner toward a paid dependent."

I had no right. I knew it well. But her words were most offensive to me and stirred me so profoundly I threw all sense of propriety to the winds.

"I have the right, madam," I said coldly, "that every gentleman must assume to himself when he sees a helpless creature treated cruelly."

There was some kind of struggle going on within Miss Livingston that prevented her replying for a moment. Her face was crimson, and her eyes were moist. I was sure she was about to burst into tears or laughter, and I could not be sure which. But after a moment she controlled herself and spoke with even greater hauteur.

"Sir Lionel," she said, "I am sorry to see you so interested in one so far beneath you. I think it would hardly please your father if he knew that you were taking up the cudgels so seriously in behalf of an unknown foreign girl, a Frenchwoman, and in service at that."

"Miss Livingston!" I exclaimed, for the moment almost too shocked for words at the heartlessness of her speech. And then I went on boldly. I was rash, perhaps, but I believed I was right.

"Miss Livingston, Miss Desloge may be a foreigner and a Frenchwoman, and, as you say, in service, but as to being far beneath me, she is as far above me as the star is above the moth. And as to my father being displeased, my father is a gentleman, madam, and would recognize a lady of true breeding however lowly her station might be."

I could not be mistaken, there was a fleeting twinkle in her eye at my brave speech; no doubt she thought it boyish. In a moment she spoke again, but with an entire change of manner.

"Oh, la!" she said, tossing her head, "what an ado about nothing! Come in to breakfast, Sir Lionel, and let bygones be bygones. Perhaps I will have experienced a change of heart and be the most considerate of mistresses by the time you come to Clermont again."

I bowed stiffly and followed her into the house. I liked neither to have my serious protest made light of in this fashion, nor to be treated as a boy, but I saw no use in prolonging the discussion. I was half angry with myself for having begun it. I had accomplished nothing, I was quite sure, but to put myself in Miss Livingston's bad graces and cut myself off from Clermont. And Clermont, of course, meant Mademoiselle.

There was no one at the early breakfast but the travelers, and Miss Livingston and Miss Desloge, except, of course, the silent Miss Pomeroy, an ancient maiden lady who lived at Clermont in Mr. Robert Livingston's absence as perpetual chaperone, and who would not have thought she was doing her duty if she had allowed the young ladies to be present at the early morning breakfast without her. It was due to her presence, I thought, that I found no chance for a word of farewell with Mademoiselle, for, though I knew she was gracing this early meal for Mr. Livingston's sake, and not mine, I none the less coveted a word with her, and was irritated proportionately with the prim Miss Pomeroy.

And though I could not make the opportunity, since Miss Pomeroy clung to me with a persistence that was far from flattering, since she seemed to think I was to be treated with suspicion, yet I thought Miss Desloge might have made it; and I rode down that magnificent avenue of scarlet and gold through the crisp, frosty air, Lloyd on one side of me and Mr. Livingston on the other, with gloom and dissatisfaction in my heart that was little in consonance with the bright October morning.

Mayor Livingston told us, as we rode down the familiar Post Road, along the banks of the beautiful river, that he had been waiting at Clermont only to hear the result of our expedition. Although he assured us he had not for a moment counted on our recovering the money — La Force's plans, he knew, would be too well and deeply laid — yet, I believe that he had counted much on it, and that his disappointment was proportionately great. How we had come to fail in our attempt I could hardly see. I had been so confident of success and it maddened me to think La Force had been so much cleverer than I, watching us, no doubt, as we toiled up the hill to Natty Bumpo's cave with that heavy chest, and laughing to himself at our fruitless labor.

As he said, Mr. Livingston had only waited to know the result; now he was going back to New York to resign his office and make his arrangements for leaving the city. He had resolved to try his fortunes in the new province of Louisiana and in the city of New Orleans, which was to be formally ceded to the United States in December. He had high hopes of success there as a barrister, since he was fluent with his French and had the American law at his tongue's end and his finger tips — by which I mean he was both ready to speak and to write it.

I saw but little of him after my return to the city, and I often wondered if he were in communication with Mademoiselle Desloge and how his affairs were progressing in that direction.

Of Mademoiselle I saw nothing and heard nothing at all for four or five weeks. Then, one day late in November, I received a note from Miss Livingston dated from the Livingston house on Broadway, and saying that Miss Desloge had told her that she had an engagement with me for sunrise on the morning of the twenty-fifth. Since the twenty-fifth happened also to be Thanksgiving Day — a great feast day with the Americans, I had heard — she invited me to dinner on that day. And since Thanksgiving dinner was always a family affair and likely to be tedious, it was set for the early hour of three. Would I come and be one of the family with them, since I had no family of my own in America with whom to dine?

I thought it particularly kind of Miss Livingston to forget and forgive in this friendly fashion my berating of her so cavalierly on my last morning in Clermont. I told her so in my note when I accepted her invitation, but what I did not tell her was that I could not so easily forget her treatment of Miss Desloge. However, I hoped she might have reformed in that, and I was glad of a chance to see Miss Desloge again on any terms. I racked my brains for a good two hours before I could remember any engagement with Miss Desloge for the twenty-fifth, but at last I recalled our conversation on the *Sea Gull* and the invitation I had given her to be present with me to see the flag raised on the liberty pole at sunrise on November twenty-fifth — an invitation which I had understood she did *not* accept.

I knew I was not mistaken and it set me to wondering what she could mean by reminding me of it now. Did it mean she wanted to see me again? Had my silence of weeks piqued her? Could it be possible she had repented of her refusal? Was she, at last, beginning to think she would be willing to marry some other than a Frenchman?

It was foolish of me, no doubt, to be encouraging any such hopes, but I could not set out in the dark of that bleak and icy November morning for my walk down Broadway to Miss Livingston's house, without thrilling at the thought that perhaps, this time, my hopes would not be vain. Even if I had had no hopes at all, the mere thought of seeing her again, after an absence of weeks, would have set me all ablaze with anticipation.

And in this absence from her I had come to one determination: Miss Desloge liked me, of that I was sure. I was almost sure that she liked me better than anyone else, at least, in America. It was possible, of course, that there was someone in France she liked better — someone she hoped to go back to some day — but I hardly believed that. I believed, instead, that she had fully determined she would marry none but a Frenchman and live only in France. Well, perhaps that determination was unalterable; perhaps it was not. But unalterable or not, I had resolved that I would not seek Miss Desloge; I would not thrust myself upon her or worry her with my importunities; but whenever, by good chance, I was in her presence, I would enjoy every moment of it. No other man, when I was near, should have more of her smiles or more of her words. Now this was rather a brave resolution, and I was reminding myself of it and screwing my courage up to stick to it as I walked briskly down Broadway on an icy pavement. I was likely to spend most of this day in Miss Desloge's society; let me see to it that I improved every moment of it.

It was with a heart beating high with resolve and excitement that I was ushered into the Livingston library by a sleepy black man. A newly-kindled fire blazed in the wide chimney place and lit up the dusky room with a warm glow. Into this rosy glow stepped the most enchanting little figure I have ever looked upon. I had seen Miss Desloge only in filmy summer frocks or rich evening dress. I hardly knew this slim creature in a long pelisse of hunter's green with sable trimmings, her little chin nestled in a broad tibbet of rich dark fur, and her little hands lost in an enormous muff, while a quilted bonnet of hunter's green satin with a drooping plume half hid her sweet brown eyes and red gold curls.

"Is this Miss Desloge?" I said as I came forward into the fire-glow beside her, "or is it a little Esquimau straight from the North Pole?"

"Not straight from the North Pole, but straight from Mr. Astor's store on Queen Street. Don't you think these furs are lovely? They would cost a fortune in Paris."

Now I knew well enough that they must have cost a fortune here, also, for I, too, had been in Mr. Astor's store, and the warm coat I was wearing, fur-lined from my ears to my heels, had come from that famous dealer in furs and had cost no small sum. I wondered how she had been able to buy them. Had she squandered every cent of her small salary (I supposed it must be small), or were they a gift from Miss Livingston? Well, it was none of my business; so I answered her, looking straight into her eyes:

"Lovely, indeed! I have never seen anything lovelier."

"Shall we be going?" she demanded quickly. "We must not miss seeing Van Arsdale climb that liberty pole."

For answer I extended my arm and she barely touched it with the tips of her little mittened fingers. Whereupon I boldly seized her hand, resolutely drew it through my arm and held it close.

"We are likely to find some ice on the streets, Mademoiselle," I said; "you must needs have a firm hold of me."

"Are you so much surer-footed than I?" she asked, laughing, to cover her confusion, the signs of which I could plainly discover, even in the depth of her bonnet, and at which I rejoiced.

"Put out your foot and let me see," I demanded.

Whereat she daintily set forward a little foot in a fur-tipped moccasin.

"I thought so," I said. "About as big as Titania's, and as much use on an icy pavement as a pair of Chinese chopsticks."

"We are wasting time," she answered. "Come, the sun will be up before we know it," pulling me forward with her little hand as she spoke.

The sleepy black let us out of the door into a fairy world.

"Oh!" she said, and again, "Oh! I have never seen anything like it! Is n't it enchanting?"

And indeed it was. I had never seen anything like it either. Up and and down the street every graceful drooping elm, every straight-limbed poplar, every wide-armed maple, was a blaze of diamonds. It had been so dark when I had left the City Tavern I had hardly noticed them, but now the dawn was rapidly brightening and every tiniest twig was a prism breaking up each faintest ray of light into a thousand flashing beams.

We walked through Fairyland down Broadway to the Bowling Green, and what I liked much was that we walked on a sea of glass, so that I had good excuse for holding that little hand close, and what I liked still better was that sometimes, as her feet slipped, she clung frantically to me with both hands, and little shrieks of "Oh!" and "Ah!" and "Mon Dieu!" Fortunately the great muff hung from a heavy cord around her neck or it would have been lost many times in that short but dangerous passage to the little park at the foot of Broadway.

In spite of the early hour and the icy morning there was a crowd of men and boys with a few scattering women to see young David Van Arsdale climb the pole and set the colors flying. He did it like a seasoned salt, and though the pole was not greased, the ice made it hardly an easier task than his father had found it twenty years before. As the brilliant banner floated to the breeze it was greeted with cheers, and Mademoiselle waved a white handkerchief and I swung my hat, though neither of us was American. Yet every heart, whether Gallic or Saxon, loves to see a gallant deed, and my sympathies had always been on the side of the colonies as I had read of their seven years' struggle for freedom.

The wind that swept up the bay was growing colder every minute, and Miss Desloge began to shiver. There was nothing to stay for longer, except that, now the sun was up, the trees around the little Green and on the Battery below, were flashing a thousand dazzling rays from every tiny crystal. The world was a blaze of glory, and it was hard to tear one's self away.

Yet once inside the Livingston library — Miss Desloge had insisted I must come in and get warm — I cared little for the fairy world we had left, for as Miss Desloge threw off her bonnet and pelisse, the fire-light on her red gold hair was far more dazzling than the crystal world outside. She bade me take the chair in the opposite chimney corner and without giving me a chance to direct the conversation, she began at once, and with the air of an elder sister:

"Now tell me what you have been doing for the last five weeks."

But I was not to be diverted from asking the question I had intended to ask her, as soon as we were within the shelter of four walls.

"Tell me, first, how you happened to send me that message about our sunrise engagement? I suppose you know we had no engagement?"

She was taken aback by my boldness. For a moment she blushed and stammered, and then the old twinkle came dancing into her eyes.

"You are ungenerous. I thought you would think that we *had* an engagement and you had forgotten it; or at least, that I thought we had."

"No, I thought neither."

"What did you think?"

"I thought many things, but they do not matter; may I tell you what I hoped?"

But apparently she was not ready to hear my hopes. She broke in quickly:

"I will tell you why I sent that message — I was growing anxious about you; we had been hearing many reports of you in Clermont."

"I suppose you heard of my racing Saladin? I wish you had been there to see. There were sixteen entries," I went on hurriedly, determined to give her no chance to interrupt, "and Saladin got away from the field in the very start. They never came near him from the moment we left Chatham Square till we came to the finish three miles out on the Bowery Road. I won the saddle, you know?"

"Did you win nothing else?" she asked severely.

"You mean, did I win any bets? Of course I had some money up on my own horse, but it's all right. I won it ten times over."

"I would like it better, if you had lost it," she said soberly. "But tell me, where did you go when the race was over?"

"Out to the Belvedere Club with some of the members," I answered, wondering at her catechism but determined to keep my temper. "It is a delightful spot, particularly on a warm day. It overlooks the East River and you can see across to Brooklyn and down the bay, and if there's any breeze in any direction, one is bound to get it on the Club-House veranda."

"Do you mind telling me what you and your friends did at the Club?"

"Amused ourselves in the various fashions gentlemen are in the habit of amusing themselves," I answered stiffly, growing restive, at last.

"I do not know the fashion of their ways," she answered with some warmth, "but I have been hearing too much of your racing and betting and — gambling."

At that I grew angry indeed.

"Why should you care? You never gave me any reason to think you cared about anything I do," I said with a show of temper. "Perhaps if you had, it might be different. I would not then have to distract myself with all kinds of amusements."

"I do care," she answered, once more quietly. "Anyone would care about a friend's doings, and I am always thinking of your father, and why he sent you here, and what he would think."

I was silent a moment; her speech had touched me. I *had* been rather wild in these five weeks and it was largely, as I had intimated, for the sake of distraction that I had plunged into every species of folly the gay New York society had offered me. I had been finding it easy to be gay since coming back to the city. The fame of my trial and my pursuit of La Force had brought the young gentry of New York about me in crowds on my return; and a delightful set of young fellows

I had found them and their families most hospitable. There was hardly a great house on Broadway or Broad Street or Queen's Street or Wall Street, or a villa on the Bloomingdale Road or the Bowery Road that had not entertained me. I had found the daughters of the houses charming and the mothers no less so. Sometimes mother and daughter had made it plain that Sir Lionel of Clover Combe Court was welcome to even more than a guest's place in the family circle, and had I been heart free I know not but I might have succumbed to the charms of some of those fair young "Knickerbockers," as my friend Irving has since named them. As it was, I danced with them; I went driving with them on the "fourteen mile round"; with some of them, I even took moonlight walks, out the Boston Post Road as far as the Kissing Bridge; and yet returned home, heart whole and fancy free.

I had been gay, but in my swift glance backward over the five weeks I had the proud consciousness that, for all my folly, I had harmed no man or woman; that if any maiden in the gay little city thought more highly of me than she ought to think, it was no word of mine, and, I believed, no glance or air of devotion of mine that had betrayed her to it.

And so I said this to Miss Desloge, and with something of the pride of self-respect I felt, for it had come to me in a flash that, if she had been hearing of my racing and betting, perhaps, also, she had heard that I had been trifling with the affections of the young New York damsels. And I think I was right in my conjecture, for it was with an air of relief that she said earnestly and simply:

"I believe you, Sir Lionel. I did not think your father's son could ever stoop to petty follies. And now you must forgive my assuming the rôle of mentor uninvited. You must have wondered at me, but you must acknowledge, only the most friendly anxiety for your welfare could have compelled me to venture on such presuming."

I had it on my tongue's end to say, "Keep the rôle and keep the office. Be my mentor now and forever," when the sleepy black put his head in the door with an invitation from Miss

Livingston to Sir Lionel to stay to breakfast. I sprang to my feet. I had forgotten the flight of time, and with a polite message of regret to Miss Livingston and a reminder to Miss Desloge that I should see her again at three, I took my leave with a light heart. I believed I was making progress. Her anxiety for my welfare must have a better foundation than mere friendliness, or regard for my father. "And it's odd," I said to myself, "how she always brings him in exactly as if she knew him."

I think no other day I spent in America had quite the charm of that Thanksgiving Day. I found it had begun to snow when I once more stepped out of the Livingston house. The brilliant sun of the morning, that had set the ice-laden trees to flashing and sparkling, had gone. Heavy clouds had come up from the southeast and the first flakes were big and fleecy and quickly melting as they fell; but the wind gradually veered to the east, and then to the northeast, growing colder as it veered, the flakes grew smaller, filling the air, and no longer melting as they fell, and by three o'clock there were six inches of snow on the ground and no signs of letting up in what had now become a driving storm.

By three o'clock, also, the streets were alive with sleighs of every description. One-horse cutters and two-horse carioles, and an occasional one drawn by four horses, gay with bells and nodding plumes, and warm with rich fur robes, were flying up and down the Broadway, calling for or depositing merry loads at every house. Evidently the whole city was giving dinner parties, and at the same hour.

I thought a family dinner was hardly the occasion for being fashionably late, and so, wrapped in my furs, I walked down the Broadway and arrived at the Livingston's promptly on the stroke of three. The house, that had been quiet enough in the morning, was brimming with young life. Children were at every window, watching the arrivals; young people were in every cozy nook; older people were gathered around the blazing fires. I was abashed, and had it not been that Miss Livingston came out into the hall where I was getting myself out of my furs, and made me at once cordially at home by taking my arm and conducting me from group to group, I would have fled appalled. This was my first meeting with her since I parted with her in anger at Clermont. There was no shadow of remembrance, in her manner, of that parting, and I said to myself, "What manner of woman is this, that can captivate my liking by her gracious charm and make me furiously angry by her uncalled-for severity to a helpless dependent?"

I am not going to describe that dinner, even if I could. By this time many Englishmen have sat down to a Thanksgiving feast and they know the joys of the groaning table, presided over by lordly turkeys, oozing richness from every pore of their crisp brown skins. The Livingston family was a large one, and there were aunts and uncles and cousins at that dinner from every branch of the family. Many of them bore names that had already grown familiar to me as among the proudest of the proud little city. And so great a company was it that, though one long table was set the whole length of the great dining-room, another, almost as long, was set in the wide hall for the younger children.

I have said it was one of the most delightful days I spent in America, and yet I had but little chance for conversation with Mademoiselle. I had a charming young lady for my dinner partner and Miss Desloge was far down the long table. I was doing my best to make myself agreeable to my neighbor and to those nearest me, and Mademoiselle, I could see, was the center of attraction to all the young Livingstons and Van Cortlandts and Van Rensselaers in her neighborhood, and for once I liked to see it and felt no pangs of jealousy. I think what made the charm of the day to me was seeing her in so many new lights; seeing her help Miss Livingston play the hostess with such a pretty air of being at home; seeing her carve one of those great turkeys more swiftly and deftly than any man could have done; seeing all those young men hover around her, eager for a word or a smile, and the young maidens hardly less eager. And then, when the dinner was over, long after dark, with blazing fires leaping and crackling in every room, and a hundred wax tapers adding their mellow radiance to the red glow of the fires, to see her enter into the children's romp with all the innocent merriment and lack of self-consciousness of a child, was a charming thing to behold.

Not that I seemed to be watching her, I hope. I was in a cozy nook with a beautiful Miss Van Cortlandt and I do not believe she thought me too interested in the children's romp or thought me anything but entirely absorbed in her lively chatter, yet I lost not a word or a movement of Miss Desloge, while I kept up my end of Miss Van Cortlandt's pretty nonsense as best I could.

And I think she thought it was entirely for her sake that I suggested joining in blind man's buff, a game that one of the older lads had proposed, and that they had been playing for a full ten minutes. I had been watching them growing every moment noisier and more excited, as each blinded boy tried to catch and kiss Miss Desloge, and I grew every moment more eager to have a hand in the game.

I think Miss Van Cortlandt thought it was for her sake, for she blushed very prettily as she assented, and my conscience smote me. I managed to get caught by a very little girl almost on the first round, and when the handkerchief was bound about my eyes, I peeped shamelessly, and so managed to avoid all the maidens and little girls who artlessly put themselves in my way, and never losing sight of the red gold curls, I cornered their owner where she was hiding by a great hautboy and captured her. With one arm holding her as she struggled to get free, I put the other hand on her curls as if trying to identify her. Of course I knew very well whom I had caught. No other curls, I knew, could feel so soft and warm and *vital* to the touch, even if I had not caught her open-eyed and with intention. Yet not for the world, before that laughing roomful, would I have named her aright and claimed my reward; so, taking advantage of the gleeful din the youngsters were making, I said, low, for her ears alone, "my little Esquimau." Aloud I boldly named Miss Van Cortlandt who, fortunately, also wore her hair in curls. And as I named her, I tore off my bandage and pretended to be greatly surprised that I had named her wrong, and disappointed that I had lost the kiss that would have been mine had I named her aright.

As I took off my bandage I saw Miss Deslöge cowering in the corner, her hands before her face. Did she so greatly dread that kiss?

"You are in no danger, madam, since I failed to call you aright," I said gravely, but my heart was not grave. Just to have held her in my arms one moment, just to have let my hand linger on her lovely hair, caressing its clustering ringlets — for that was what I was really doing under pretense of trying to decide the owner — just to have whispered in her ear, "my little Esquimau," and felt her soft palpitation at the words, was more intoxicating than the fine old Madeira we had had at dinner, and for the rest of the evening no boisterous lad or romping lass of that merry family party was in wilder spirits than I.

By eight o'clock sleigh after sleigh with jingling bells had glided to the door, received its merry burden well hooded, cloaked, and furred, and glided away again. I made a feint of going with the others, but Miss Livingston said to me in a peremptory aside, "Stay where you are, sir," and I was glad to obey.

The house seemed wonderfully quiet after the tumult of the day, and delightfully warm and cozy and shut-in, with the wind howling down the wide chimneys and the snow driving against the window panes and piling high on the ledges. There was a loud rap of the ponderous brass knocker on the street door and, a moment later, a blast of cold air, as the knock was quickly responded to by one of the many black boys in attendance, and a great noise of stamping feet and a cherry call in Irving's well-known voice:

"Bring us a broom, Sambo, and sweep us off; we 'll melt if we go near a fire in our present condition."

When a moment later he and Kemble entered the room he saluted Miss Livingston with:

"We 've come for our apples and doughnuts and cider and walnuts, Miss Livingston. It would n't be Thanksgiving without them."

"You surely don't want them yet?" Miss Livingston asked. "You are hardly through dinner, I suppose."

"Oh, no, not before somewhere near midnight," Kemble replied for him quickly. "We 've come for a long, cozy, quiet chat after the fatigues of Thanksgiving, and the longer the better."

And that was just what we had. Each in the most comfortable chair he could find drawn up around the fire, we made a little semicircle. Mr. Livingston was to leave the next day for the South; this was his last evening with us. The journey would be a long one, and not without peril, and our talk naturally fell on the excitements of it, and the new life he was to take up in the French city of the South.

We all talked quietly, for our hearts were touched at the thought of the lonely man, going bravely out to seek new fortunes in a distant field, but Miss Desloge was even quieter than the rest of us. She seldom spoke, and then only in answer to some speech made directly to her, generally by Irving or Mr. Livingston. I wondered if it was the departure of the morrow that made her so quiet; if, perhaps, she was sad at the thought of it.

And then I, too, fell to musing — of our talk that morning; of her sweet housewifely air at dinner and her merry ways with the children after dinner; of holding her in my arms one blessed moment, and — just at that point in my musings, in came Sambo, bearing a great tray with a foaming flagon of cider, a generous dish of nuts and apples, and a goodly pile of toothsome doughnuts, exactly as Irving had demanded.

As we ate our apples we whirled the parings around our heads and flung them on the floor. Miss Desloge's made a perfect L. She blushed (was it for Lionel or Livingston she blushed?) and whirled it round her head once more. This time it was an M, as clear as print, and nothing could persuade her to try it again.

But mine made always an R. Over and over I tried it but it was always the same, and I was greatly vexed.

XXVIII

I WEAR MY HAT IN THE PIT

FOR a week I was in the seventh heaven and then, one night, I summarily fell to the seventh — hades.

For a week after that happy Thanksgiving I saw Miss Desloge every day. The very afternoon following there was a cariole party to Captain Marriner's Tavern, ten miles out on the Bowery Road, with a hot supper of oysters and game, for which the inn was famous, and dancing after supper in the long dining-room, and a ten-mile ride home in the moonlight — and I was in the cariole with Miss Livingston and Kemble and Miss Desloge!

Now you must remember that at home I had seen little of society. I was but a lad of fifteen when I entered Oxford and I had hardly been in London except to run down from college to see a play or hear some great concert — for I was music mad in those days, and played a little myself on the 'cello. My summers had been spent in travel, and at Clover Combe I cared nothing for the county society. My father told me I was too young to take an interest in it, I would come to it some day. But such a thing as a sleighing party with young men and maidens and no tiresome elders to put a check on our spirits had never come within the range of my experience. Small wonder I was in the seventh heaven!

And then the very next day Irving and I were invited out to dinner at the Grange with Miss Livingston and Miss Desloge. And going up over Harlem Heights our cariole plunged into a great snow drift and upset us all, and what with digging ourselves out first, and then the two maidens, and getting them brushed off and stowed away in the cariole with the warm rugs snugly tucked around them, and safely pulled out of the deep drift without another upset, we were in such a gale of glee by the time we reached the Grange that Mr. Hamilton pretended to be greatly offended with us. We were taking his dinner party as a huge joke, and he had a notion to retaliate by giving us no dinner. But with the appetite our ride in the keen air had given us, I assured him we would make no bones of serving him up to appease our hunger if nothing better offered.

We found this was more of a party than we had expected, with Mrs. Hamilton's sister, Mrs. Van Rensselaer, and her husband, the handsome Patroon, as the guests of honor. It was a great dinner of a dozen courses, with a bewildering variety of dishes, each one a little better than the last, and we sat so long at the table that by the time we had had our coffee in the big living-room whose windows looked out over the Hudson, twilight had wrapped the Jersey hills in gloom, the full moon was rising in the east, and it was time for another glorious ride home by its light.

The next night there was a ball given by another Livingston — that Mrs. Henry Walter Livingston who lived in the Livingston Manor House on the Hudson, on the original manor, of which Clermont was only a part. She was a very beautiful woman and a great leader in New York society and the ball was a very grand affair. Miss Desloge wore a more beautiful costume than I had yet seen her wear, all of shimmering white and silver (and it flashed into my mind that for a poor girl she had many grand gowns) and every man there wanted to dance with her; but I led her out in the minuet, I took her down to supper, and after supper it was I who dared to struggle through the new dance with her, the waltz — she floating like a fairy to the witching music, and I once more in the seventh heaven with her hand on my shoulder and my arm about her waist.

I am not going to tell the tale of every one of those seven days, each one a heaven to me and each one leaving me a little more frantically and hopelessly in love with Mademoiselle. But the seventh day was the grand climax of them all; and if each day had been a heaven, the seventh day was seven heavens.

We young men were giving an ice carnival on the Collect Pond. The great snow that had fallen on Thanksgiving Day had fallen before the pond was frozen over, but the freezing had begun the very next day and, by the time of our party, the ice was firm as a rock and smooth as glass. On the Bunker Hill, to the northwest of the pond, we had set up a pavilion for supper with great bonfires blazing before the open side of the pavilion to keep it warm; and all around the pond flaring pine knots, in iron baskets set high on iron posts, made the glittering ice as light as day. In the pavilion, looking down upon the pond, were most of the matrons of New York society, and many of the older men: the Beekmans, the Rooseveldts, the Van Courtlandts, the Tappans, the Ludlows, the Mortons, the Stuyvesants, the Van Rensselaers, the Bayards, were all there, and many more whose names I have forgotten; and below them, skimming over the ice like birds on the wing, were their sons and daughters, the ring of the metal keels on the clear ice making a musical accompaniment to silvery peals of laughter and merry shouts of glee.

For two hours we skimmed the ice, in long slow curve, in straight swift glide, wheeling and darting, now forward, now back; no flock of swallows in the clear ether could have been more swift or graceful in their flight. And for much of those two hours, Mademoiselle's little hand lay in mine, and often the others stopped to give us room and look at her, for she had learned in Paris that outward roll the Hollanders use, one foot lifted high and crossing the other, and sending her forward in great curving lines, now to the right and now to the left, that made her skating the very poetry of motion. I, too, knew the Dutch roll, so that I was no hindrance to her in her flights, and with her eyes darkened and glowing from the exercise, her rich fur cap set coquettishly on her bright curls, and the deep rose of her cheeks kindled by the keen air, I do not wonder that the others drew back to watch the lovely picture.

There was chance, also, in that long two hours (which yet passed like the flash of a bird's wing) to say many things to Mademoiselle; and some things she said in reply I can never forget. I think I almost made her confess (not in so many words, perhaps, but in language that seemed to me as plain as words) that had I been of her own country, she could have liked me well, and that it would be a sad day, indeed, when she should have to say good-by to me forever.

I believe I found a melancholy pleasure in the thought that she secretly loved me and that it was only a stern fate that divided us, a pleasure that was almost as great as if there had been no barrier between us. Indeed, I believe that element of difficulty in love is a keen sharpener to the passion. I hugged to myself the cruel pang of my hopeless love and gloried in the pain.

At six the ice carnival had begun, at eight we sat down to a table literally groaning with good things, and with appetites whetted by the keen air and exercise, and spirits brimming over from the swift racing of the blood in our veins. Nor, indeed, did the chaperones and the older men, who had not the excuse of skating, seem a whit less hungry or less brimming with spirits than we younger ones. They were full of stories and amiable banter of any two young people they fancied were specially interested in each other. I had my share of the banter, and if I had been quite sure Miss Desloge did not mind it, I would have liked it well; for just to have my name coupled with hers, even if not openly spoken, seemed to me to be another link to bind us together.

Ogden sat on the other side of Miss Desloge at supper, and Ogden had been one of the young men who, at the Livingston ball, had danced often with her, and who was forever hovering about her on the ice before supper, seizing every opportunity of skating with her. Now I liked Ogden well, and I knew I had no right to monopolize Miss Desloge, but I did not like to hear him say, "Mademoiselle, may I have one more spin after supper? Those pine knots will last just about long enough for twice round the pond."

"Mademoiselle is to skate with me after supper," I interposed boldly.

I had not asked her, for I had not thought there would be any more skating, nor did I say that she had promised me, whereby I saved myself from the form of a lie but not, I fear from its substance.

Mademoiselle looked at me, round-eyed with astonishment, but she would not betray me to Ogden. She turned to him sweetly:

"If, as you say, Mr. Ogden, there will be time for skating twice around the pond, I will skate once with you and once with Sir Lionel."

And then to punish me, I think, for the liberty I had taken, she devoted herself to Ogden for the rest of the supper hour. But if she thought I was suffering from my punishment she was mistaken. I was elated. She had not betrayed me — she must care a little to be so careful of my self-respect. She had given me the last round — perhaps that could be prolonged into two if the pine knots lasted.

Moreover, an idea had flashed into my mind, and I had taken a sudden resolve. It was all nonsense that Mademoiselle would not marry me simply because I was not a Frenchman. Of course she would prefer to marry one of her own countrymen, just as I would prefer to marry an English lass, all else being equal. But difference in nationality was no insuperable obstacle, and there was but one woman in the world for me. What weighed more with me than this difference was that I had not my father's consent and I had promised to take no serious step without it. My idea was that this weighed most with Mademoiselle, also. I had once told her of my promise to my father, and her pride would not permit her to encourage me without his consent. Well, my resolve was taken. I would write that very night to my father, I would tell him all about Mademoiselle, her gentle breeding, evident to the merest stranger and proved by the way the New York gentry sought her, and the cruelty of her position with Miss Livingston. I did not doubt my father's answer, and until then I would hold myself in patience. I would see her and enjoy to the uttermost every moment in her presence, but I would say no more to her of love and marriage until I had my father's letter.

And so engrossed was I in the making of this resolve, the thought of the letter I was to write, and still more of the answer and what was to follow, that I scarcely heeded Ogden and his devotion to Mademoiselle, and without a pang let them leave the table with only a word of excuse to me, and go down together to the pond.

The night after the Ice Carnival, I had promised to go to the New Park Theater (which was so called, although it had been built for several years, to distinguish it from the old John Street Theater) with Irving and Dick McCall. Lewis Hallam the younger was to play Lord Oglesby. I had seen him in the character in London, but he was well worth seeing a second time, and, moreover, I had never been to the play in New York and I was curious to see the playhouse, the manner of setting the play and the audience. All New York would be there, Irving said, for this was Hallam's first appearance since his return from London, and he was a prime favorite with New Yorkers.

I would have liked well to be going with Mademoiselle Desloge but Ogden had been ahead of me, and the first thing that caught my eye as I entered the house was the stall where he and Kemble sat behind Miss Desloge and Miss Livingston. The house itself was an agreeable surprise; I had not expected to find it comparing so favorably with our London playhouses. The stalls and boxes were a dazzling sight; I did not believe His Majesty's itself could present such a glittering circle of jeweled beauties, eyes and gems alike flashing in the rays from a thousand tapers.

As was the custom, we three, being gentlemen of quality, kept on our hats as we took our seats in the pit. Instantly from the galleries broke forth a bedlam of shouts: "Off with the hats!" "Take off your hats!" I removed mine hurriedly, abashed at being the object of such attention, and with Mademoiselle to see. So, also, did Irving and McCall, though with less haste. In a moment the shouts were turned to hisses. Could I but have made up my mind to brave the hisses all would have been well, but at the sound my blood boiled, and more hastily than I had removed it I put my hat on again with an air of bravado.

"Don't do that!" Irving remonstrated. "You'll get into trouble. The hissing won't last a minute and that will be the end of it."

"For Heaven's sake, take off your hat, man," McCall urged, but I was stubborn, and before either of them could utter another word of warning the storm broke: oaths, cat-calls, cries of "Curse his British impudence!" "Down with the Lords!" "Knock off his hat!" came from all over the house. And then, suddenly, from behind me some man did knock it off.

I sprang to my feet, blind with rage, and saw the man who had done it seated behind me and smiling good-humoredly. I believe now that he did it with the amiable idea of putting a stop to the uproar, and saving me from further persecution. But I did not believe so then.

"Pick up that hat!" I ordered, speaking quietly but with every pulse quivering.

The man laughed.

"Sit down, youngster," he said, still good-naturedly, "and keep quiet; the curtain 's just going up."

For answer I sprang at his throat. He was a big man but I never thought of that. I thought of nothing but that my father's son, the son of an English gentleman, was being bullied and jeered at, and made a laughing-stock for all Americans in the presence of Mademoiselle!

A roar of laughter from the galleries, and some of it from the pit, had greeted the knocking off of my hat; a wild uproar burst forth all over the house as I sprang at the man's throat. I had a confused sense that every man in the house was on his feet, that some were crying, "Kill him!" "Kill the Britisher!" and others were shouting: "For shame!" "Order!" "Let the gentleman alone!"

The man himself was dazed for a moment at my sudden onslaught, but when, seizing him by the collar with one hand, with the other I dealt him a resounding slap on his cheek he came to himself and, springing to his feet, grappled with me fiercely. He was powerfully built and in the end, no doubt, I would have fared badly, had we been left to ourselves, but Irving and McCall sprang to my rescue, and a dozen men from all sides rushed in to separate us.

Panting and helpless in the grasp of my friends I saw, through the red haze that bleared my eyes like blood, two officers force their way through the crowd to my side. They were in uniform and they carried heavy clubs. For one wild moment I thought of resisting them; I could not bear the ignominy of being arrested and carried off to jail as a common disturber of the peace under the eyes of all those gay people, to most of whom I was very well known. Oh, why try to deceive myself! At that moment I cared not the flip of my finger for all New York and its gay society. It was Mademoiselle Desloge that I could not bear to be witness to my disgrace.

But it was only for a moment that I thought of resisting. My better sense returned to me. I knew how useless any resistance would be, and summoning all my fortitude, with lifted head, but with eyes looking neither to the right nor to the left, I was marched off between the two officers, through a jeering throng, to the outside of the theater. And my old retreat, the Bridewell, being but a stone's throw across the square, I was hurried into it once more.

I had lost Irving and McCall in the throng, but I had been in the Bridewell but a few minutes, when they came hurrying in with Kemble and Ogden, whom they had brought to go on my bond.

"No one in New York would regard my bond as worth the paper it was written on," laughed Irving, "but Kemble, here, is a staid old fellow, and a man of property besides; for does n't he own Cockloft Hall in his own right?"

Professing to regard the whole matter as a huge joke and trying to laugh me out of my desperate mood, they went through the necessary formalities to get me out of the Bridewell (each one of them, I believe, binding himself over to see that I kept the peace). They were for persuading me to return to the play, but to that I would not listen for a moment; neither was I deceived by their kindly pretense of making light of my escapade — I had disgraced myself and my friends, and if the opportunity had been given me to set sail for England that night, never to see New York or any of its people again, I would not have hesitated for a moment.

Nor would I hear of any one of the four returning with me to the City Tavern. Kemble and Ogden, of course, must go back to the ladies; Irving and McCall should return to the theater; and as for me, I was tired and would seek my bed. And heeding no remonstrances, I called a pony chair and bade them good-night.

But there was no good night for me. Motionless in an easy chair, where I had thrown myself as I entered my room, my head sunk on my breast, my arms hanging listlessly at my side, I sat for hours in such agony of soul as only a sensitive spirit overwhelmed with a flood of shame can know. Mademoiselle was lost to me forever! Of that I was as certain as if I had heard her saying so to me in that voice that thrilled me always like the lower 'cello tones I so loved. I was no better than any low-born brawler in her sight. She would think, no doubt, that I had been drinking; perhaps that it was my custom to engage in brawls of the kind. She would never want to see me again!

My fire had long been out and I was chilled to the bone when, sometime in the early morning hours, I roused myself from my stupor. I sprang to my feet and began pacing my room with rapid strides to restore the circulation to my numbed limbs. And with returning action came returning courage. All need not be lost, irretrievably. I would go to Mademoiselle; I would make my humble apologies. I would bewail my passionate temper that had led me astray, but I would plead in extenuation that it was because I had felt my country reviled in my person that I had gone so wild with rage.

And as the rushing words in which I was to plead my cause came racing into my mind, faster and faster I walked, and lighter and lighter grew my heart, until, at last, I found myself picturing with delight the sweetness of her voice and smile when she should utter her forgiving words and take me back into her favor.

The old moon, the pale ghost of that glorious orb that had lighted us on our ride from Marriner's, was peering in my eastern windows (a sign that dawn was near) when I lay down on my bed in a happier frame of mind than I had believed, six hours before, I would ever know again. "Mademoiselle is an angel! She will forgive!" was the burden of my thoughts as I fell asleep, and the refrain of my dreams through all my troubled slumber.

At five o'clock the next afternoon, having with Scipio's aid (Scipio had now become my permanent valet, devoted to me body and soul) made a more careful toilet, or rather a more anxious one, than was my habit, I walked down the Broadway to the Livingston Mansion. It was an hour at which I was quite sure dinner would be over and I might hope to find Mademoiselle at home. It was only a short walk, but hope and dread, fear and courage, a faint heart and a bold one, made it seem interminable.

With each of these mingled emotions struggling for ascendency, I lifted the heavy brass knocker of the Livingston door and let it fall. To my excited imagination it gave forth a sound, so loud and long, with such ghostly echoes, as might have waked the dead, and I blushed for my rudeness in not having let it fall more gently, as was proper, I knew, in calling on a lady; and most befitting a call of penitence.

Yet bold as had been my summons it received no immediate answer, which surprised me, since I was familiar with the quick and ready service required in the Livingston mansion. I was just about to try the knocker once more, when the door was opened by the same sleepy black who had opened it for me on Thanksgiving morning, but this time he wore no livery, which was another surprise.

As he opened the door I caught a glimpse of the wide hall and of the two great rooms on either side. Pictures, Gobelin tapestries, ornaments in bronze and Sevres, of which the house was full, sent home by Mr. Livingston from Paris; chairs, sofas, lusters hanging from the ceiling, and sconces on the wall, were all shrouded in ghostly white. I knew very well what the answer to my question would be before I asked it:

"Are the ladies at home?" I said.

"No, sah, dey lef' foh Clermon' dis mohnin' by de Albany Post, sah."

"Do you know when they will return?"

"Not zackly, sah. Not till after Christmas, nohow. Mebbe not all winter."

XXIX

A LITTLE ESQUIMAU

I HAVE sometimes wondered what would have become of me if I had gone back to the City Tavern and spent that evening alone in my room. I was in a desperate mood. Black despair was in my heart and such a sense of shame as, of all the emotions, is the hardest for the youthful soul to endure. I believed I had disgraced myself irretrievably — Mademoiselle's going away proved it. And added to all the black burden of shame and mortification, my soul was seething with an unreasoning anger against her that she should have gone away without giving me a chance to reinstate myself.

I was in such a desperate mood that when I reached my room and found there a note awaiting me from Mr. Burr, inviting me to spend the night at Richmond Hill, I had no thought, for the moment, of accepting his invitation. I had called Scipio to be in readiness to take my answer, and my note regretting the necessity of declining was half written when I let my quill fall (making a huge blot on my paper) and began on an entirely new vein of thought.

It was not the part of a man, I said to myself, to allow himself to be crushed by any blow, however severe. It was a man's place to mold circumstance, not to be molded by it. I had made a mistake in giving way to my temper at the theater most childishly, as I could now see, but to sit down and sulk was only being still more childish. I had made a misstep. I would retrieve it to the best of my ability.

Mr. Burr's invitation, if I was to accept it, needed no answer, therefore I tore up the half-written note and in place of it, wrote a brief, and what I hoped was a manly, explanation and apology to Mademoiselle, in which I said those things I had planned to say to her in person during my call. The post for Albany would not leave again for three days, but once having determined on the letter I could not postpone the writing of it for a moment, and once written, sealed and addressed, I set out for Richmond Hill with a sense of relief from an intolerable burden, and with more of zest for my anticipated visit than I could have expected.

It seemed that Mr. Burr had arrived in New York from Washington the day before. I did not, at first, connect my invitation from him with my escapade at the theater, but later I learned that he had been present; and I believe that he had divined the acuteness of my mortification, and that it was from generosity, sympathy and benevolence that he had extended his invitation.

Mr. Burr had fascinated me from the first moment of my acquaintance with him. His boyish figure and dark, smiling eyes, the wonderful variety and breadth of his information, and a certain winning trick of speech had proved irresistible to me. Yet often when I was away from his direct influence, when I could think and judge of him calmly, I was not sure he was a man to be trusted; and I had never given him credit for the amiability, the genuine goodness of heart, that his thoughtfulness for me in my hour of distress showed. Later, with all the world, my heart was full of anger toward him, but still later, when I thought of him, a wanderer and almost an outcast, as he was for many years, with no man speaking good of him, I remembered his kindness to a friendless lad — for so I imagined myself at that moment to be — and I could not believe him to be all bad.

He was very brilliant that evening with none but me and a young Mr. Van Ness to hear or appreciate. He had many tales to tell us of his life in Paris, and then we fell to discussing the poets we loved, Wordsworth and Coleridge, and Southey and Burns, Cowper and Gray and the older ones. He had something wise and witty to say of each one, and he paid me the compliment of listening with apparent pleasure to all I had to say of them in return.

In the course of the evening he said he must start for Washington the day after New Year's. Business of importance had called him away from the capital (I believed it was political business, for I had heard that he was hard at work laying all his plans for the spring campaign for the office of governor), but that it would be absolutely necessary that he should be back as soon after the opening of the year as possible, and he invited me to go with him.

I was in a frame of mind to clutch at a straw like that. Mademoiselle Desloge, I believed, would not be back in New York until the winter was over — what was the gay little city to me without her? But, more than that, I would be glad to get away from everyone I knew, glad to hide my diminished head among strangers in a strange city. I would have gone even more gladly if it had been on the morrow we were to start. As Mr. Van Ness was not in the room when the invitation was given, I did not hesitate to express to Mr. Burr something of my feeling on the matter, and he spoke to me of my experience of the night before.

"I was present and saw it all," he said, "but you ought not to take it so to heart. It has happened to many a young blood before, and all who saw understood it perfectly. You may be sure that if there were any of your friends present, and there were many of them, I know, their sympathies were with you and not with the rabble."

"I should have supposed so," I answered, somewhat bitterly, "but I have seen but little evidence of it."

"What!" he exclaimed, "were not Irving, Kemble, McCall and Ogden all that was kind and friendly? Did they not come to your rescue at once?"

"Oh, yes," I answered indifferently, "I can always rely on the Lads of Kilkenny."

"Ah, you refer, I suppose, to Miss Livingston and Miss Desloge and their abrupt departure for Clermont?"

I had not supposed he knew of it, and I was silent, not knowing what to say, for it was their silence and their sudden departure that I resented so keenly.

"Sir Lionel," said Mr. Burr, after waiting a moment for a reply from me and getting none, "let me give you a maxim culled from much experience with the fair sex and their ways: Never think you understand them, even when their actions seem to speak the loudest. *Never despair!* In affairs of the heart more than in any other—*Perseverantia omnia vincit!* But, moreover, I would add for your encouragement, she who runs away, runs because she knows her heart is in danger. Had she not feared you she would have been indifferent to you and stuck to her guns."

He spoke jestingly, but somehow his words inspired me with courage. We spoke no more of Miss Desloge, but I found myself for the rest of the evening in a much better frame of mind to enjoy his keen and witty observations on men and affairs. It was fully ten days later that I received Miss Desloge's answer to my note, and by that time I had so often conned over to myself Mr. Burr's words that they had become an integral part of my philosophy, and the note that might have angered me earlier, I now regarded as one of the feminine inexplicables, only to be interpreted by the light of fuller experience.

"Sir Lionel," it ran, "You were quite right to call your behavior at the theater childish. If I were a man, I would not offer an ungovernable temper as an excuse for any such weakness. It is all right to possess temper; I have heard it makes a man strong, but to be possessed by it is all wrong and certainly an indication of weakness. There was a little excuse, as you say, because you considered your nation insulted in your person. I can sympathize with that sense of loyalty to one's country, but I believe its manifestation was a mistake; it helped to win respect neither for your nation nor its representative. The whole trouble, of course, came from wearing your hat. If you will insist on claiming the privileges of an aristocrat in a democratic country you must take the consequences; but I hope next time you will take them good-naturedly. The rabble is easily controlled by imperturbable good-humor, but is as easily aroused by a display of resentment, and once roused is an ugly beast to deal with.

"Now, I fear this sounds like a lecture. Regard it so, if you like, but remember it is only one who has a friend's interest at heart who dares presume to lecture.

"YOUR LITTLE ESQUIMAU."

Now there was much in this note to inflame a quick temper, and I felt mine flashing in waves of blood to my temples as I read, but when I came to the signature, my pulses stood still. *My* "little Esquimau!" She must have known I had used those words as a term of endearment in our game of blind man's buff. Was she willing to accept the title? If so, she accepted all it signified, and for a while I was in a turmoil of mingled hope and uncertainty, keenest delight and chilling doubt.

I came to my senses at last by recalling Mr. Burr's words — "Never think you understand a woman, even when her actions seem to speak loudest." No doubt Miss Desloge had used the title jestingly, to show me that her lecture was not so formidable as it sounded. At any rate, I was not going to rear a mighty structure of hope on such a slim foundation. I answered the note, as I thought necessary — in any correspondence the lady should never be allowed to be the last to write — and I thanked her for the lecture, which I believed was well intended and I hoped taken in good part. I pledged myself to try to profit by it, and I hoped hereafter to prove myself the possessor of a temper, not possessed by one.

All that was very cool and didactic — it meant nothing but the commonplaces of polite usage. But I audaciously began my note, "My dear Little Esquimau," and I signed myself, "Faithfully yours, Lionel Marchmont."

I had not expected an answer to this, and I did not receive one. Christmas was at hand, New Year's would follow quickly, and the day after New Year's I was to start for Washington. When would I ever see Miss Desloge again? If only Miss Livingston would take it into her head, or rather her heart, to invite me up to Clermont to spend the Yuletide. I watched each Albany post day with longing, but no such summons came. Instead, there came an invitation from Mrs. Hamilton to come out to the Grange on Christmas Eve and spend Christmas and the day following. I arrived, like a veritable Santa Claus, with my sleigh piled high with toys for the children, for I had learned that in America the German fashion of celebrating Christmas with gifts prevailed rather than our English customs. I found the house decorated with holly and mistletoe, which looked more like home to me than anything I had seen in America, but I wondered where it came from, since I had seen none growing in the country. Mr. Hamilton had had a barrel of it shipped from his native Carribees, he said, and that evening, the house being full of a gay party of young people from the city, all of whom I knew well, I kissed, at various times, at least six maidens under the great branch of mistletoe that hung suspended from the middle luster in the long drawing-room. One of the six was Angelica, and I was sorry, the moment after, that I had done it; for she flushed scarlet and then turned pale, and I caught Mr. Hamilton eyeing me keenly, as if he had noted her signs of distress and liked it not. She was the apple of his eye; never have I seen father and daughter in such perfect sympathy (unless, indeed, I except Mr. Burr and his daughter), and while he was a fond father to all his children, toward her he showed ever a peculiar tenderness.

I was sorry I had kissed Angelica, since neither father nor daughter was pleased thereby, and yet it was not a thing to apologize for, not only had I kissed many others in the gay romp of the evening, but Mr. Hamilton himself had neglected no chance to steal a kiss from any young and pretty maiden who happened inadvertently to stand for a moment under the mistletoe. Indeed, never had I seen him in such gay spirits. He was down on all fours to let his youngest boy ride him as a horse when the company arrived, and rose to his feet perfectly unabashed to greet them with all the grace of a courtier. He galloped through a country dance with a pretty Miss Bayard and led the Virginia reel (which was a new dance to me) with a stately Miss De Lancey.

Mrs. Hamilton sat in a corner and talked with Mr. Troup and Gouverneur Morris, also home from Washington for the holidays, smiling with affected tolerance at all her husband's pranks (I believe secretly they delighted her soul); and there was not a belle nor a beauty there but was prouder of his attentions and open admiration than if they had been from any of us younger men. How little any of us thought, he least of all, that this was to be his last Christmas. And what a blessed thing it is for all of us that the future is so closely veiled from us; that we cannot see even one step ahead. Had his wife and children known what lay scarcely six months ahead of them, there would have been nothing but anguish of soul for them at that happy Christmas tide; and, as it was, I believe it must ever be one of their most blessed memories — the joyous spirit with which he entered into all the innocent merriment of the season.

Christmas Day, if not quite so hilarious as Christmas Eve, was full of delight. I was made one of the family with such cordiality as could not but touch the heart of a lad so far from home and just a little homesick at the Yuletide. The children shared their gifts with me and made me a partner in their games, and I, who had never had brothers or sisters, who am a great lover of children and yet had come but little into close contact with them, found this one of the keenest pleasures of the day. We spent the morning, or the better part of it, coasting down a hill so steep and long it quite took my breath away the first time I tried it, and I thought it a dangerous pastime for such young children. But Mr. Hamilton did not seem to think so, and still less did the children, to whom it was an old story and all its perils too familiar to daunt them. The joy of flying through the air down that steep descent with the swiftness of the wind would have lost half its zest to the children if their father had not shared it with them, and it was a marvel to me to see the great statesman, whose name was honored in every civilized nation on the globe, a boy among his children, and to all appearance, the happiest and most carefree of them all.

I was thoroughly tired, and Mr. Hamilton, I have no doubt, more so (though the children seemed as fresh as at the start), when Mrs. Hamilton sent a black boy to call us into the house. Such flaming cheeks and sparkling eyes! Even the fair, pale Angelica was all aglow, and more like a glorious rose than a delicate lily. It is the only time I ever remember to have seen her in the abandon of youthful glee, for it seemed to me always that a sad and anxious soul dwelt in those somber young eyes.

And if we had gathered roses on the snow hill, still more had we found a keen hunger. A glass of milk for the children and an eggnog served from an immense crystal punch bowl to the older ones, was all Mrs. Hamilton would allow us to dull the edge of our hunger. She was not going to have her great Christmas dinner spoiled by any nibbling between meals. It was still an hour until dinner time and that, after all, proved almost the pleasantest hour of the long, delightful day. Mr. Hamilton invited me into his study. Angelica followed her father as a matter of course, but she sat on a low stool at his side and took no part in the conversation, only watching her father with rapt eyes that let no word he spoke, nor the slightest change of his expression, escape her.

I had found Mr. Burr brilliant and fascinating. I found Mr. Hamilton something better. Mr. Burr had talked of men and singled out their foibles with keen and caustic wit. Mr. Hamilton talked not of men but of measures. He was full of great ideas of broad statesmanship, and as he talked I saw the whole political world of Europe and America laid out before me as a map. I saw more clearly than I had ever before seen, the causes, reaching back hundreds of years, for our perpetual quarrel with France. I saw Bonaparte's motives laid bare in every move he had made, and I saw the mistakes on our side. Especially did he show me the vital defect in the Orders of Council, which were new then, and which all England believed were to prove most efficacious, but which all England was not long in discovering bore more hardly on the farmer and merchant at home than they possibly could on any foreigner. It was a marvelous mind of whose powers I was permitted a moment's glimpse, and that hour before dinner will always remain one of the proudest of my life, that so great a statesman should think it worth while to squander his wealth of ideas on so young a man.

It may be that I did not see Mr. Burr at his best; it may be he did not consider me worthy of his best, but the conversation that had appeared to me so brilliant, as I listened to it that evening at Richmond Hill, seemed to me now as glittering tinsel in contrast with the rich and mighty flow of thought I listened to that Christmas morning. And I came to the conclusion that Mr. Burr was a brilliant politician, but Mr. Hamilton was a great statesman. Of course, I have long since known that so the judgment of the world has classed the two men, but I have always been a little proud to think that I discovered it for myself before I knew the judgment of the world.

I left the Grange the next morning, feeling that I had known and loved this family for years, and nothing could have been kinder and more cordial than the way in which they tried to persuade me that I had given them more pleasure than they had given me. I hardly dared to ask so great a man to visit my father at Clover Combe Court, but when I found courage to urge a request I had begun to set my heart on (I longed to have my father know Mr. Hamilton and hardly less did I want him to know Mrs. Hamilton, for my father was ever a lover of a charming woman), when I found the courage to utter all this, Mr. Hamilton sighed or pretended to.

"It has been the dream of my life, Sir Lionel," he said, "to take Mrs. Hamilton to England some day, and to Scotland, the land of my forebears, but I stayed in public life too long. A man who devotes himself to the welfare of his country must necessarily neglect the welfare of his family. I am a poor man; but I have left public life now for good and I am attending strictly to my own business, and in a very few years, if health and strength are spared, I hope to be able to take my wife and my seven children abroad. Will your invitation hold good for such a distance in time and for such an army of guests?"

He laughed his boyish laugh as he finished speaking.

"For all time and for as many as you will bring," I answered. "The more you bring the better pleased my father and I will be."

The rest of that Christmas week passed in a round of festivities. The city was a little Paris in its gay social life. I had hardly time to think of Mademoiselle, and yet there was never a dinner or a ball but I watched eagerly to see if by some happy chance I might not see Miss Livingston and Miss Desloge among the arriving guests. But I looked in vain. New Year's day arrived and on the very next morning I was to start for Washington with Mr. Burr — it would be months, now, before I could hope to catch a glimpse of her, and in the meantime what might not happen? Wherever she went, she was surrounded by eager admirers, who might at any moment become ardent suitors, and perhaps, at last, one of them a successful one.

The Lads of Kilkenny were to spend New Year's day in making calls together. It is a pretty custom that we do not have at home, and is a survival, I believe, from the old Dutch times, when New York was New Amsterdam. We were to make an early start, for there were many calls to be made, and promptly at ten o'clock the little procession of three carioles, gay with nodding plumes and rich fur robes and jingling bells, started from Tammany Hall, where we had all gathered. There were calls to be made on Williams Street and Queen Street, Wall, Broad and half a dozen other streets, to say nothing of calls at such villas as were not too distant on the Bowery and Bloomingdale Roads. We were to leave the Broadway to the last, since it would be nearer home to most of us than the other streets.

And thus it happened that it was growing quite dark, and the carioles, dashing up and down the Broadway at feverish speed, were many of them already lighted by flaring torches set in links in the dashboards, and our long list of calls was almost ended, when we drew up before the Livingston mansion. Now I had passed that house every evening since the sudden departure for Clermont, always hoping I might find it lighted and the owners returned; but always to find it cold and dark and the shutters closely barred. Now as I glanced up at the house with an idle wonder as to why we had stopped there, to my amazement it was a blaze of light from attic to cellar.

Irving sat next to me in the cariole.

"Did you know they had returned?" I asked sharply.

"Of course I knew it," he answered; "we all knew it, but we were keeping it as a surprise for you. I hope you like our surprise?"

He spoke with a laugh in his voice; he never doubted I would like it. But I was not so sure. Now that I knew that in another moment, in all probability, I would be ushered into her presence, I trembled and would have liked to run away. All New York had seemed to forget my escapade in the Park Theater, but I was not sure that she had forgotten it — or forgiven it. Moreover, here had I been all day long driving through the frosty air, rushing into warm houses, talking a few minutes with pretty ladies in pretty frocks, sipping wine, or punch, or coffee, as the case might be, rushing out again through the keen air, into my furs and out of them, and it was impossible that I could look as fresh and immaculate as I would like to appear before her. Between the oft-repeated wine and the long day of driving through the keen air, face and eyes must be more or less flushed, and what with doffing of hat and coat and donning them again repeatedly, neither hair nor lace ruffles nor ribbons could help but be more or less disheveled. We had stopped twice for repairs during the day, once at Kemble's house and once at my rooms in the City Tavern, and I wished we might go back to my rooms once more and get ourselves decently in order before making this last and most important call. But there was no chance given me to propose it. Ogden and McCall and Kemble, who had been in the cariole ahead, were already on the steps and lifting the heavy brass knocker, which presently resounded up and down the street.

"Come on, lads!" Ogden shouted, and at the same instant the door flew open and we must hasten lest we be so unmannerly as to keep the door standing wide for us and giving entrance to wintry blasts.

In the hall, where we stopped to be helped out of our furs, I caught a glimpse of myself in a mirror that hung above the table and was somewhat reassured. My cheeks were rosy and my eyes were shining, but not from wine, I believed: I had taken little of it, fearing the effect of repeated draughts. It was the keen air that had set them glowing, or, perhaps, the excitement of anticipation. My curls were somewhat disordered, but I thought not unbecomingly so, and my ruffles were in better condition than I could have hoped. I had made a swift resolution while I was getting out of my furs and straightening curls and ruffles — I would be the last to enter, and I would carry it off with a brave face; neither Mademoiselle, nor the keenly critical Miss Livingston, should be able to guess how my pulses were leaping and my nerves quivering.

Fortunately, I thought, there were a number of other ladies receiving with Miss Livingston and Miss Desloge, enough to keep the other men engaged and give me a chance to speak to Miss Desloge alone. I purposely left her for the last, that I might take all the time I wanted.

I fancied there was the slightest shade of embarrassment in her manner as she swept me a curtsy in response to my low bow.

"A happy New Year to you, Mademoiselle," I said.

"May you be happy, also — and successful!" she returned.

I thought her last two words were an afterthought, but they were none the less pleasant to hear.

"I shall not be happy unless I am successful," I replied with a glance whose meaning she could not mistake. "But tell me, please, do the inhabitants of the Arctic regions always drop down on their friends in this unexpected fashion? Why did you not let me know you intended to return?"

A quick wave of color showed she understood. I could not call her "my little Esquimau" in public, but I boldly reminded her that I still claimed her so.

"If you mean Miss Livingston and myself by 'inhabitants of the Arctic regions,'" she said quickly, "we must plead guilty, I fear, to a liking to surprise our friends."

"No, I did not include Miss Livingston," I murmured, looking straight into her eyes; "there is only one woman in the world to whom I would give that title."

"It sounds a cold and frigid one," she answered with a saucy smile; "I hope that 'only' woman does not shiver when she hears it."

"I hope not, indeed," I answered; "I would be sorry to have her grow any colder than she has already proved herself. But, Miss Desloge, I am very sure my time is limited; five minutes has been the length of most of our calls to-day and the five minutes is more than up. I want to tell you seriously how hurt and disappointed I am that you did not let me know you were to return at the New Year."

"Can it make much difference?" she asked with adorable shyness. "We are to be here all winter."

"Worse and worse!" I groaned.

"Why?"

"I leave to-morrow to be gone all winter."

I could not be mistaken, she turned pale for a moment, and for a moment she was silent. Then she said softly:

"Could you not delay your departure, for a few days at least?"

"I am promised to set out for Washington with the Vice-president to-morrow morning," I answered her gloomily. "I do not see how I can break an engagement with him at this late hour."

She was silent again as if trying to plan something, which she gave up finally.

"Well," she said at last, with a little sigh of resignation, "'T is the fate of all surprisers to be themselves the surprised ones, and not always agreeably. But your calls must be finished by this hour. You will at least stay and spend the evening with us?"

I shook my head and glanced at a large gilt clock on the mantel.

"In five minutes, according to that French time-piece yonder, we are to start for Cockloft Hall, where the Lads of Kilkenny are to spend the first night of the New Year together."

"Miss Livingston," said Miss Desloge, raising her voice a little to call the attention of Miss Livingston, who stood a little ways from her talking to Kemble, "Sir Lionel is very anxious to see that century plant just coming into bloom in the conservatory. May I show it to him?"

"Certainly," said Miss Livingston, regarding me curiously and bestowing on me an enigmatical smile.

"I will give you just five minutes, Green," Kemble called to me as we turned toward the conservatory. "In five minutes we start for Cockloft Hall, you know."

In the conservatory I barely glanced at the century plant.

"Well?" I said, turning to Mademoiselle.

"Do not go to Cockloft Hall," she said, looking up at me, her soft brown eyes full of gentle pleading.

It was what I was longing to do, to stay with her this last evening in New York and give up the night of roystering it was sure to prove at Cockloft Hall. But I steeled my heart. She was asking much. Would she give as much?

"Mademoiselle," I said, "it is asking a great deal, is it not, to ask me to break an engagement with a party of friends who are depending on me?"

"It is a test of friendship," she urged softly.

"It is more, Mademoiselle," I answered boldly; "it is a proof of love. And it is a proof I am very willing to give you, if you will accept it."

She hesitated long before she answered, and I, watching her keenly, took it as a favorable sign. When had she ever hesitated before? She had always been quick enough heretofore with her—"I will never marry anyone but one of my own countrymen"—was she going to change that now? My heart was going like a trip hammer, but outwardly I was calm enough. Never had she looked so beautiful to me—her light dress, of palest green and silver, and her wonderful red gold hair, brought out vividly by the dark background of palms and camellia plants, her long lashes lying on her softly rounded cheek where the color was coming and going and the scarlet bow of her lips slightly parted to let the quick breath through. I could see she was strongly moved. Never before had I seen in her such signs of emotion, and I gathered hope with every waiting second. But at last she lifted her eyes and looked at me sadly.

"I see," she said slowly, "you must go to Cockloft Hall," and sighed as she spoke.

It was my turn to let my eyes fall and be silent for a moment. I could not let her see the bitter disappointment I knew they betrayed. But in a moment I had myself well under control.

"Very well, Mademoiselle," I said lightly, "it is as you decree."

"Time 's up!" called Kemble's voice from the drawing-room.

"Coming!" I called in return, and turned toward the drawing-room as I spoke.

"But surely you are not going without saying good-by," Mademoiselle exclaimed quickly, coming toward me with extended hand, anxiety, regret, sorrow, shyness, daring — many mingled emotions in her soft brown eyes.

I took her hand in both of mine:

"No, Mademoiselle, I am not going without saying good-by. I would not be going at all did you not decree it. But it is not 'Good-by, Mademoiselle,' it is 'Au revoir — my little Esquimau.'"

And as I spoke I looked straight into her eyes, defiance in my glance.

Her eyes fell beneath my glowing look, her whole form drooped, but she would not utter one word.

I lifted to my lips the hand I was still holding between both of mine, and as I dropped it I offered her my arm, formally.

"Shall we go back to the drawing-room, Mademoiselle?" I said.

XXX

CAPTAIN SKINNER REAPPEARS

MR. BURR was at the gates of Cockloft Hall in his cariole the next morning at eleven. On horseback, behind, rode Scipio leading Saladin; for we had driven out to Cockloft Hall in our sleighs the night before, and Scipio and Saladin were both to go with me to Washington.

We were to stop two days in Philadelphia: I to make a promised visit to Lloyd, Mr. Burr to visit some young lady in whom, for the time being (for I had heard his affections were fickle), he was most deeply interested. I had been wretchedly unhappy, in leaving New York, at the thought that I was leaving Mademoiselle behind me for the whole long winter, but now that my face was really set toward my journey's end, my spirits rose with the eagerness of youth for new scenes and untried experiences.

I was particularly eager to make this little visit to Lloyd in his own home, and never did I spend two days more delightfully. His family lived in a great house on Sixth Street, and there was every evidence of immense wealth in the home, its furnishings, equipages, horses, and black servants without number. I had found nothing finer in New York than their manner of living, and yet there was a difference, which I suppose was due to the difference between the two cities. The Philadelphia establishment seemed to me less ostentatious. It impressed me not so much with its magnificence as with its quiet elegance.

But it was Lloyd's family that impressed me most and delighted me greatly. His father must have been, in his youth, another such man as his son, and even in his advanced years and broken health he was still a magnificent ruin, with a fine manner that is an inheritance, or a gift of the gods — it comes not by training. His mother was still beautiful and the gentlest speaking creature I have ever known, which I suppose was due to her Quaker blood, for though she dressed richly, it was in soft grays and drabs, and she used the pretty "thee" and "thou" of the Friends. His two sisters were not yet "out," and, of course, they were shy in talking to a young man, though they were without the awkwardness I have sometimes noted in our girls at home, not yet out of the schoolroom. I was sure they would both be beauties and belles when they were once in society, for both were as beautiful as Lloyd was handsome, with the same brilliant coloring in hair and complexion. It was evident they idolized their big brother, and when they had overcome their first shyness they had many tales to tell me of his prowess and his goodness.

They were all so kind to me (for Lloyd's sake) they would hardly let me go when my two days were up, and indeed it was with real regret I tore myself away. I would have liked much to make a longer visit and I gladly promised them another and a longer one before I should return to England.

We made rapid progress for the rest of our way to Washington, changing horses frequently, and pushing on so rapidly that late the first night out from Philadelphia we reached Baltimore and put up at the Fountain Hotel. It was midnight when we arrived, but they were expecting Mr. Burr, and we sat down at that late hour to a dinner of canvasback duck, terrapin and oysters, famous Baltimore dishes, cooked and served in a wonderful style such as I never expect to see or taste again.

Mr. Burr and Lloyd had both prepared me for a Washington of huts, barracks, and mud flats, but it was a little more forlorn than I had expected to find it. Yet among the huts and barracks there were a few palaces, and many delightful people, some of whom I had met before. My old acquaintance, Mr. Gouverneur Morris, was there in the senate, supplementing whatever the Vice-president left undone in the way of introductions and attentions, though I am bound to say Mr. Burr was a most considerate and attentive friend. I was not his guest in Washington. It had seemed to me best to find quarters in an inn, where I could be more independent than in the home of a friend, and I had found comfortable rooms in the very tavern where Lloyd had put up during his brief visit to Washington the winter before, to which he had recommended me, and particularly to the good graces of an old negro factotum of the inn, Bandy Jim. When Bandy Jim learned that I knew "Marse Lloyd," and was the bearer of messages from him, he became my devoted slave on the spot, adopted Scipio as his son, and nothing in the hotel or out of it, that he could lay hands on, was too good for Scipio or his master.

My two months in Washington, which I had looked forward to with some dread, fled rapidly. I was daily meeting distinguished men and charming women; there were balls and dinners to pass the evenings; there were always the sessions of Congress to absorb the hours of the morning. I was often at the presidential palace for dinner, for the President seemed to have taken a liking to me, perhaps because I was the bearer of a letter of introduction to him from Lloyd — for no one ever met Lloyd without liking him.

Mr. Jefferson was a great lover of horses and took his regular exercise on horseback every morning, and several times, at his invitation, I accompanied him. On the first of these rides, I noticed him eyeing Saladin curiously, but it did not for a time occur to me that Saladin had been his gift to William Jay from his own stables in Monticello, sent to William, I heard afterwards, for the sake of his mother, whom the President greatly admired.

"You have a fine horse, I see," Mr. Jefferson said, when we were riding that first morning out toward Georgetown, a pretty village on the heights, with some fine residences.

"Yes, sir," I answered, "but he does not belong to me; he is loaned me by a friend."

"Ah!" he said. "Your friend must love you much, or trust you greatly, to lend you so fine an animal."

"I hope both, sir," I answered. "But my friend is still a boy and the horse was unbroken when he received it, and his friends thought him too young to ride it until it was thoroughly used to control."

"And you broke it for him?" he asked with such interest that the reason began to dawn upon me.

"Yes, your excellency," I said, and then broke off suddenly. "Why, it was you, sir, who gave the horse to young William Jay! I had forgotten it entirely!" I exclaimed. And then I blushed.

"I hope you do not mind my appropriating your gift. It is only until William shall be able to ride it for himself, which will be very soon now."

The President's face brightened into a very pleasant smile.

"I not only do not mind, but I am glad it happened so. It gives me a chance to see Saladin again and to be quite satisfied with the way in which he has come to mind bit and bridle. I had some qualms, after sending him to the lad, for I think I should not have sent him until he was well broken. I have no doubt his Aunt Kitty was quite indignant with me; she has a little temper of her own."

"Not only his Aunt Kitty, but all his female relatives, I believe, sir," I answered soberly.

The President laughed.

"Well, you have no doubt reconciled all the sisters and the cousins and the aunts to my gift by this time. You must have a talent for the breaking of colts, for I can see that Saladin is remarkably well broken."

I was much pleased and greatly flattered. My horsemanship is the one accomplishment of which I dare to be vain. I believe it was the one thing that made the President show such an interest in me, inviting me frequently to the palace, where I met all the men of note of the day and most of the brilliant women. There I met often the famous Mrs. Madison, and was as much under the fascination of that queen of women as was all the rest of the world.

Mr. Burr was never at the "White House"— that is the name the President has given to his palace — but once when I was present. I think he and the President were not very good friends. The one time was on the occasion of a dinner given to Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Bonaparte; they were guests of Mr. Burr, and so, of course, he was included in the dinner given to the beautiful bride and her distinguished husband.

She was a bride of a very few weeks when she came to Washington, and the wedding had been the talk of the city. Most of the Washington people had known the lovely Miss Patterson and many of them had met the young Bonaparte. Society was equally divided, I think, in approval and disapproval of the marriage. There were many who thought she had made a brilliant match, and that to be the sister-in-law of the great Napoleon Bonaparte was an honor any woman might covet, but there were many, also, who foreboded only unhappiness for the beautiful bride.

I met her first at the President's dinner, but I met her many times afterward, at Mr. Burr's and in other houses. I had fallen under the spell of her beauty at first sight, and it is one of the crimes for which I am least able to forgive the great Napoleon that he should so ruthlessly have broken the heart of that exquisite creature. She reminded me much, both in looks and manner, of Theodosia Burr, as everyone in America still called her, and I believe the Vice-president saw the likeness also; he certainly found Mistress Bonaparte most charming.

I had been very curious, also, to meet Jerome Bonaparte, the brother of the man for whom I entertained the most profound hatred mingled with some unwilling admiration. I little thought when I met him familiarly, as I did many times, that I was hobnobbing with a future king, but I think he had a very good presence for the figure-head of a king, which was all any of Napoleon's brothers could hope to be while the Emperor lived. He was a handsome man, and had very pleasant manners, and altogether I rather liked him, though somewhat against my consent.

It was meeting so many interesting people that made those two months fly so swiftly, in spite of the fact that my thoughts were constantly turning to gay New York with a great longing. Late in February I received a letter from my father in reply to the letter I had written him about Miss Desloge. It had been long overdue and I had almost ceased to hope for a favorable answer. He had waited, he said, to hear from Mr. Livingston in Paris before writing me, and Mr. Livingston had written him there could be no reason in the world, so far as family, breeding, or personal character could go, why Sir Lionel should not marry Miss Desloge, if he so desired; and my father, therefore, gave his own free consent, only conditioning that there should be no wedding until I returned to England.

I cannot tell you with what ecstasy I read my father's words, somewhat chastened, I confess, by the remembrance that there was another consent to be won beside my father's. But I had all along believed that it was because I had told her that I was under promise to my father not to engage myself without his consent, that Mademoiselle had thus far refused to listen to me. I believed the last redoubt was taken, the last defense was down!

From the moment of receiving my father's letter I was impatient to be gone from Washington. Unfortunately, I had promised to wait for Mr. Burr and return with him. He was to leave for New York on the fifth of March and the fifth of March was hardly a week away; I had not the hardihood to propose going on ahead of him, since I could think of no plea of urgent business demanding my presence at once in New York. There was nothing for me to do but to possess my soul in patience, as best I could.

Now Mr. Burr had a theory, he told me. In Washington a snow had fallen on the third of March unusually heavy for that latitude in that season of the year. Mr. Burr's theory was that for every degree in latitude going north, the depth of the snow would increase two inches. Since it was six inches in Washington, it would be eight in Lancaster and ten in New York.

"We will go home on runners, Sir Lionel," he said exultingly, "and we will get there in half the time we would on wheels."

Which was true, for the roads are very bad throughout this country, and particularly in March.

But alas for all theories! Every mile we traveled north the air grew warmer and the snow softer. By the time we reached Havre de Grace, ready to cross the Susquehanna — a broad and beautiful river here at its mouth, as it had been a beautiful little stream at its source — our runners were cutting through to the ground. Long before we reached Lancaster our cariole was dragging heavily on bare mud, and I had taken refuge on Saladin's back to relieve the sleigh of all unnecessary weight. Instead of making time we were losing it every hour, and I chafed at every minute's delay that kept me longer from New York and Mademoiselle.

Yet impatient as I was, I believe the Vice-president was no less so, and he had greater cause for impatience than I. The caucus had met in February naming the candidates for the Presidency and Vice-presidency for the next election and Burr's name was not on the ticket for either place. No doubt this was a keen disappointment to him for I believe he had expected the first place; I have come to think he was an inordinately conceited man, and believed his popularity to be far greater than it ever was. With indomitable pluck, as soon as he realized one prize was lost, he set himself to straining every nerve to secure another, and his candidacy for the office of governor of New York was already in full swing. But he knew that he was needed to direct it and every moment's delay in reaching New York lessened his chances of success.

Yet with every reason for impatience, while I chafed openly he jested cheerfully, ridiculing himself and his theories that had brought us to such a pass, with imperturbable good nature. Only once in the course of that trying journey did I hear anything like bitterness from his lips.

"If it had been possible I could have believed Hamilton had a hand in this thaw," he said bitterly, "he has blocked me in every step of my political career. It was he who kept me out of the Presidency four years ago; it was he who prevented my name from being presented to the caucus this time, and now he is moving heaven and earth to keep me out of the governor's chair."

I had not realized until that moment the acuteness of the feeling between Hamilton and Burr. It had increased rapidly within the last few months; I do not believe that Burr would, at this time, present himself at Hamilton's house informally as he had done last summer. Now, though I was fascinated by Burr and admired him extremely, I loved and reverenced Hamilton, and this speech embarrassed me greatly. Burr was always quick to feel sympathy or lack of it in a listener, and with a ready change of manner he went on, relieving me of the necessity of speech.

"I have a very great respect for Mr. Hamilton's abilities; indeed, I quite stand in awe of his powers at times. Do you suppose he can control even the elements, and has sent this thaw to keep me out of New York a day or two longer?"

I laughed, as he intended I should, and the conversation drifted from politics to less dangerous topics.

We gained a little time by stopping in Philadelphia only for a night's rest. Neither of us had any inducement for a longer stay, even if we had not been so impatient to reach New York. I had heard Mr. Burr say that "Celeste" was out of the city. I do not think that was the real name of the young lady he was so interested in, but a pseudonym he had given her for convenience, and because, no doubt, he thought it particularly appropriate to her. As for me, I had received a letter from Lloyd, early in February, telling me he was going out to St. Louis to see his old friends, Captain Clark and Mr. Lewis, start on their expedition of discovery to the Northwest, and by this time he was probably nearing his destination; so I was not to be detained in Philadelphia, therefore, by a visit with him, and barely giving ourselves a night's rest, we made an early start on what we hoped would be the last lap of our journey. But the roads were impossible, almost impassable. We had changed our runners for wheels at Lancaster, but much of the way we were up to our hubs in mud. The melted snow and the warm air drawing the frost out of the ground had made the roads a deep paste of sand and clay.

"It was certainly not in March that Washington Morton took his famous walk," exclaimed Mr. Burr disgustedly, when we had been dragging along laboriously for hours and making but little progress.

"What was it?" I asked.

"He walked from New York to Philadelphia on a wager," he answered.

"I believe it would be easier walking than driving," I laughed. "But did he really do it?"

"Yes, and won something better than his money. Everybody says the fame of his feat won him his wife, Mrs. Hamilton's sister, Cornelia Schuyler. The Schuylers all love deeds of daring. Mrs. Hamilton fell in love with her husband when he was a dashing young officer; Cornelia and Washington Morton were both much younger; the war was over before their time, and since there was no longer a chance of winning his wife by feats of arms, young Morton must needs win her by a feat of feet."

I laughed and, in fact, tedious as was the journey, I laughed the greater part of the way, for Mr. Burr was always beguiling its tedium with anecdotes of people I knew or knew of, or by some jest or witty story. He was incomparable as a conversationalist, untiring as a host, and for unfailing good humor I have never known his equal.

And after all my impatience I was too late. I reached New York only to find that Miss Livingston and Miss Desloge had left for Clermont just two days before. I could have torn my hair and gnashed my teeth in the impotence of rage at my unhappy fate. I was for starting for Clermont the next morning, but calmer counsel prevailed with me to be not too precipitate. I would write and tell Miss Desloge of my letter from my father and get her permission to go to Clermont and plead my suit in person.

I do not believe letters are ever of much avail in affairs of the heart. Miss Desloge replied, but very coolly. It would not be convenient for Miss Livingston to have Sir Lionel at Clermont just now, the house was upset with spring cleaning and spring dressmaking. Nor did Miss Desloge, herself, think such a visit expedient at present. She would be in New York with Miss Livingston early in May, and until then would Sir Lionel please bear in mind Miss Desloge's oft-repeated ultimatum. *It was still in force.*

Whereupon I came very near going into one of my black rages, such as I have not had since I was a boy and the little Rosie used to torment me until I could neither see, nor hear, nor think. When I recovered a little from my rage and read over Miss Desloge's letter once more, I was not so sure as I had been, at first, that she intended to enrage me. I was not sure but it was written in fear of Miss Livingston. It seemed to me I could discern her hand in it. I almost believed it *was written at her dictation!*

That month of March seemed to me the most interminable month of my life, and to add to my other troubles the weather was intolerable — cold, raw, blustery, a March of the Marches! The city I had thought so gay and bright in the fall and early winter, comparing it in my mind with Paris, seemed to me the dreariest spot in the universe. It was full of the same people I had thought so charming then, but though I pursued a dreary round of dinners and dances and card parties and plays, the charm was gone.

Early in April I received a letter from Lloyd, written in St. Louis, and bearing astounding tidings. He was bringing home his bride, the Comtesse de Baloit! They would arrive in Philadelphia early in the month and just as soon after their arrival as I could, conveniently, he wanted me to come over from New York and meet his bride. He had found her in St. Louis on his arrival and — he was the happiest man in the world.

That I well believed, and I was honestly glad for him, but somehow my own prospects of happiness looked none the brighter by comparison. A few days later I received another note from him, written this time from Philadelphia — they were at home and they wanted me to come over at once, to be in time for the wedding festivities.

The whole city of Philadelphia was agog over this wedding and for two weeks there was a ceaseless round of festivities in honor of the bridal pair. I thought it must be hard on a newly married couple to have so little time to see each other, but they went through their part bravely, and the countess won all hearts by the sweetness and graciousness of her manner as she had won all eyes by her beauty. And then, a sudden stop was put to the festivities by the terrible news from France of the murder of her cousin, the young Duc d'Enghien, with whom she had taken refuge in Baden when she fled from Paris and Bonaparte. The latter part of my stay was as quiet as the first part had been gay, though the bride would not allow her grief to darken her husband's happiness. She bore it very sweetly, and talked much of her cousin and how brave and gallant he was; and hearing her, I registered another vow against the arch-villain Bonaparte.

It was the first day of May when I returned to New York. At home it would have been a great festival, with the hedges all a-bloom and lads and lasses out before the dew had dried to gather the May with which to crown the queen. There were no hedges in this country through which Saladin and I rode, but everywhere the orchards were a-bloom and the whole countryside was one vast pink and white nosegay.

"Apple blossoms are for first love," I said to myself as I plucked a fragrant spray from a tree that overhung the road. "I could not honestly send apple blossoms to Mademoiselle; she is at least my third love; Rosie Dufour and Peggy were ahead of her. But I have half a mind to send this to her; it will at least remind her of my existence." And I stuck the rosy branch in my saddle-bow for safe-keeping.

At the City Tavern I found some changes. A ship from the Bermudas had arrived, bringing many guests, and among them a dapper little fellow wearing an eyeglass. I knew he was from home as soon as I saw the eyeglass, and seeing that he was alone and looking a little forlorn I ventured to speak to him, for which small act of humanity I have been richly rewarded. For the author of "Lalla Rookh" and the "Irish Melodies" came to be one of my life-long friends, and though I do not now regard "Lalla Rookh" as so great a poem as I once did, yet I still think there are no sweeter lyrics in the language than "Believe Me, If All Those Endearing Young Charms," "Come Rest In This Bosom," and some of the other Irish Melodies.

I did not know then how great a man in embryo I had lighted upon, but it did not take a minute's conversation to discover that he was a man after my own heart, and I invited him up to my rooms. There we fell at once to talking books and poetry and he confessed modestly that he dabbled a little in verse, and showed me sonnets he had been writing to a Bermuda beauty. I was enchanted with them and begged for a copy, and thought to myself — Oh, could I but write such verses to Mademoiselle!

He had been in the Bermudas for his health, incidentally holding a position in the Admiralty there, and he had much to say of the beauty of the islands and the loveliness of the climate, but he was thoroughly homesick and intended to stay in New York no longer than the sailing of the next packet.

The *Morning Chronicle* was lying on my table and as we talked, young Mr. Moore, for that was his name, picked it up and read a little sketch signed Jonathan Old Style, and was charmed with its cleverness.

"You shall meet the author," I said. "You will take to each other like two birds of a feather. And I will introduce you to Paulding, our poet. He writes real poetry and gets it published in the *Evening Post,* our other newspaper. Oh, you will find we have some taste for letters here in the new world."

The next day I hunted up Paulding and Irving and brought them around to meet Mr. Moore and the three were friends in a trice. He was a jolly little fellow, an Irishman, and he persisted in calling Irving Mr. Old Style. We made up a party to the Vauxhall Gardens for that night, and I found his society so fascinating that I scarcely left him for a moment during the day and it was for that reason, I suppose, that I did not hear the news of the town, and so was left to stumble upon it accidentally.

It seemed that the gardens were opening that night for the first time for the season, and all the beauty and fashion of the city were thronging the Bowery road on their way to celebrate the event. They were only open through the summer months, and the last summer, owing to the yellow fever, they had been closed for a large part of the season.

We arrived late, and being arrayed in the very height of style, long blue riding coats with silver buttons, scarlet waistcoats, yellow knee-breeches and long silk stockings with silver buckles on our shoes and at our knees, we flattered ourselves we created somewhat of a sensation as we made the tour of the boxes, ogling the pretty ladies we did not know and bowing low to those we did.

Irving and Paulding and Moore were each wearing a small bouquet of lilies of the valley pinned to the lapel of his coat collar, and I had stuck a sprig of my apple blossom, still fresh and fragrant, through the button-hole of mine. Dancing had already begun and Irving and Paulding soon deserted us for two pretty girls whom they led out on the floor. I stopped, with Moore, in front of a box, whose occupants I did not observe, to point out the dancers to him, rather proud to be able to name the most beautiful of them and to receive a smile from some of them as they came near me in the mazes of the figure. And so engrossed was I in this occupation that I was quite startled to hear my name and an imperious voice exclaiming:

"Sir Lionel, of what crime have your friends been guilty that you refuse to recognize them?"

I turned quickly, and with a madly beating heart, for I recognized Miss Livingston's voice, and knew whom I might expect to see with her. There they both were with Mrs. Montgomery and the Countess Niemcéwiscz and three gentlemen. One of the three, as I might have expected, was Kemble; one, as I might have feared, was Ogden; and the third, of course, was the handsome Polish count.

I bowed low to the ladies and begged permission to bring my friend into their box, which was readily granted. As I called his name Miss Livingston cried:

"Not Mr. 'Thomas Little,' whose volume of verses I have in my library?"

And in the same breath Mrs. Montgomery exclaimed:

"Not the translator of the Odes of Anacreon?"

My friend blushed and owned to the soft impeachment, and I was not a little proud and not a little amazed to find myself in the company of so great a man. The ladies were all affability and made a lion of Mr. Moore at once; "the Little Lion," Miss Livingston called him, in reference both to his nom de plume and his size. Tea had already been ordered but the order was increased to include us and as my good luck would have it, or my skillful manœuvering, I am not sure to which I owed it most, I found a seat by Mademoiselle Desloge. Ogden was on her other side, but I was determined to give him but little chance to talk to her, and he very soon gave up trying and devoted himself to the countess.

I found that the ladies had been in New York nearly a week, and I bewailed the fate that had made me lose so much precious time in Philadelphia. I said so to Mademoiselle and she smiled skeptically.

"Your friend's sisters are very beautiful, are they not? I have heard so."

"Yes, they are very pretty little girls," I replied coolly; but I added with enthusiasm, "His wife, the countess, is one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen."

"And a Frenchwoman?" she smiled.

"Are all Frenchwomen so beautiful?" I demanded.

But she was not compelled to reply to that, for at that moment a familiar voice assailed my ears, and a long arm and sinewy hand was extended toward me.

"Fer the land's sake! Sir Lionel, where did you come from!"

It was my old friend Captain Skinner, and I was delighted to see him. The ladies had seen him before, for he had been in town more than a week and, it seems, had called on them — which struck me as a little odd.

After his first hearty greetings the good captain was a little embarrassed. He had not seen me since the trial, for he had sailed for England while we were chasing La Force, and he had never been quite satisfied with his performance on that occasion. It was the embarrassment of a conscious disloyalty, for he had too evidently believed me guilty.

"I wish you'd a caught the darned critter, Sir Lionel," he said to me. "I owe him a good 'un myself for deceivin' of me so — the sneak!"

He had a letter for me from my father, he said, and handed me over a bulky package which I recognized at once, from the feeling, must contain banknotes, and I put it carefully away in my waistcoat pocket, feeling a little vexed lest its bulk should mar the perfect set of my coat on which I prided myself. But it was delightful to hear so directly from my father and I had many questions to ask the captain of his looks and his health. Also, the captain had much to say of the state of alarm the whole southern coast of England was in, lest Bonaparte might at any moment descend upon it. He, himself, no longer ventured through the Channel; he made his landing for France, at a little port on the west coast, and for England at Clover Combe!

So that was how he had come to see my father! I was greatly excited by his news and wished much that I could go home with him (he said he was to sail in a few days) if only I could take Mademoiselle with me. And I determined on the spot to write my father a letter to send by the captain, begging him to shorten my exile. I wanted to be at home to help defend my beloved Devonshire should it indeed be in peril.

Much as I enjoyed seeing the captain, however, and talking of home, I was not sorry to have him say good-by, for I felt these moments were precious. The noise of many voices, the music and the sound of tripping feet on the polished floor, set Mademoiselle and me off to ourselves. I could say what I pleased, if only I lowered my voice. It was after much delightfully confidential talk that Mademoiselle said:

"Where did you get your apple blossoms? Do they grow apple trees in the City Tavern?"

"I plucked them on the road from Philadelphia," I answered, "and I gathered them thinking of you. You know their language?"

"First love, is n't it? but I hardly see why you should think of me."

"Because you are my first love," I answered boldly.

"How about Peggy?" she retorted with twinkling eyes.

"Oh, Peggy! I learned long ago that I was never in love with Peggy. My vanity was tickled, and my callow judgment was dazzled."

"And, let me see, there was my old friend Rosamond Dufour, was there not, before Peggy's day?"

"A red-headed, freckled-faced baby!" I exclaimed impatiently.

Her eyes were twinkling as if a dozen mischievous sprites looked out of them and the merry dimples were playing hide and seek in her cheeks. I was seized with an overwhelming desire to get her off by myself, for always just when I began to think I was making some headway in my suit, Miss Livingston would break into our talk with some sharp question or demand of Mademoiselle that became unbearable as the evening passed. It was — "Mademoiselle, you have neglected to fill Mr. Ogden's cup again!"—"Mademoiselle, where is my powder bag?"—"Mademoiselle, my shoulders are cold; put my cloak over them!"

It was in vain that I or anyone else sprang to execute her commands, she always insisted that Mademoiselle should do it, and I was rapidly growing to hate Miss Livingston, who looked so handsome and could be at times so charming.

It was after a demand a little more outrageous than the others that I said to Mademoiselle:

"Will you stand up with me in the dance?"

She answered with a look of delight that I could not mistake:

"I will speak to Miss Livingston, and if she has no objections —"

"Oh, how can you be so servile!" I broke in rudely. "It surely is not necessary to ask her permission to dance with *me!*"

But she shook her head, smiling.

"With you more than anyone," she said, and turned to Miss Livingston.

"Sir Lionel asks me to stand up in the dance with him," she said, "Have you any objections, madam?"

"Certainly, I have," Miss Livingston answered coldly. "The hour is late, nor do I think it proper that in so public a place, a young lady in your position should stand up with the 'observed of all observers.'"

For one dreadful moment there was absolute silence in the little circle. I very nearly forgot that Miss Livingston was not a man. Oh, that I could have struck her in the face and challenged her on the spot! I saw Mademoiselle give Miss Livingston one quick reproachful glance, and then her eyes fell and her beautiful face was bathed in burning blushes. It was not possible that I should remain longer a member of Miss Livingston's party where I was so helpless to protect Mademoiselle from insult.

"Mesdames and Messieurs," I said, bowing low, "I will bid you good evening. Mr. Moore, Mr. Irving will see you to the City Tavern. Good night, Mademoiselle, I will do myself the honor of calling on you to-morrow." And I stalked away with my head in the air.

But on the morrow, when I called, the ladies were "not at home." It was the same on the next day and on the third and the fourth. On the fifth day, for I would not be discouraged, Miss Livingston came down to the drawing-room alone. I rose to my feet as she entered the room and gave her no chance to speak.

"I called to see Mademoiselle Desloge," I said quickly; "I think you and I can have no dealings with one another, Miss Livingston."

"Sir Lionel," she said, so gently that I marveled, for I had supposed my speech would anger her, "I have come down to make some explanation to you. I think you cannot refuse to listen to a lady."

I bowed, and she went on:

"Some day you will thank me for all that you now so resent in my treatment of Mademoiselle. Some day we will be friends."

She paused a moment, and I merely ejaculated, "Impossible, madam!"

"I am as sure of it as that I stand here," she insisted. "Some day you will think very differently of me, when you know the truth about Mademoiselle."

"You speak as if she were some villain or criminal in disguise," I flashed at her. "I will not hear one word in defamation of her. Will you be so good as to tell her I am here and ask her to come down to see me?"

She answered slowly, still speaking gently and looking at me with eyes that seemed to entreat my forgiveness:

"Mademoiselle sailed for home yesterday, on the *Sea Gull.*"

XXXI

MIGHTY IN DEATH

ALL the suffering I had endured when I thought I had loved Peggy and lost her was as nothing to my agony of soul now. When Miss Livingston finished speaking I stood staring at her for a full minute — I was as a man turned to stone. Then without a word to her, I turned and went out of the house.

It was five o'clock in the afternoon when I left the Livingston mansion; it was nearly eight, and rapidly growing dusk, when I came to myself sitting on a rock overlooking the Hudson far beyond the little village of Greenwich. How long I had been sitting there I knew not. I think it was some vague memory, stirred by the sunset, that brought me back to self-consciousness. The sun had set over the Jersey hills in a golden sea, into which dropped the slender crescent of the new moon; nine months before I had watched that slender golden shallop sailing into a daffodil sea with Miss Desloge by my side.

"Never again!" I groaned aloud, and getting to my feet I shook myself, as if so I might once more rouse the currents of life stagnating in my soul. I turned and walked toward the city, slowly at first, but more rapidly, as the every-day facts of existence began to return to my recollection, and I remembered that I had young Tom Moore on my hands for the evening and the hour was growing late.

"Hearts may break but dinners must be eaten," I muttered to myself, and hurried on, wishing that Tom Moore had never dropped upon these shores, or wishing, how much more fervently, that I had never seen them myself.

Passing the Bayard place, young Bayard stepped out of the gates and recognizing me in the twilight, was surprised to see me so far from home, and walking.

"Out for a constitutional," I said lightly. "Do you never walk yourself, sir?"

"Often, and if you will let me, I will walk a way with you now," he answered.

I could have wished him a thousand miles away, but there was nothing to do but to express my pleasure in his company. He had been particularly polite to me since my return from Washington and I had come to like him well, but there was no man whose society would have been pleasant to me then.

In the course of our walk he said to me, quite shyly:

"Sir Lionel, I have long been desiring to ask you to come out and spend the night at the house and go fishing with me in the morning before sun-up. Will you come?"

"I should be delighted to, sometime," I answered, never expecting to do so, and, still less, dreaming of the terrible event that would make my fishing with him one of the indelible memories of my life.

Before I had reached the City Tavern I had made a definite plan for the next ten weeks. Tom Moore, having fallen into pleasant company, for the Cockloft Hall lads had shown him much attention, had recovered from his haste to be off for home. He was talking now of touring the country, going as far west as Niagara and then down the St. Lawrence to Montreal and Quebec, and so back to New York by the Lakes Champlain and George, and the Hudson River. He had proposed to me to go with him, but I had not considered it; I had other plans that would require all my time and all my energy.

Now I no longer had any plans of my own. What I most longed to do was to return by the next packet to England, but my letter, asking my father's permission to return, had gone out only the day before on the boat with Mademoiselle; it would be fully ten weeks before I could receive an answer, and to spend that ten weeks in New York would be intolerable. I would go with Mr. Moore — possibly in the excitements of travel I might find some distraction.

I found him waiting for me in my rooms, and with him were Irving and Kemble and young Cooper, whom I had not seen since our return from the pursuit of La Force. I believe now, though I did not think of it then, that Kemble and Irving had heard of Mademoiselle's sudden departure, and guessing it would be a blow to me, coming on top of my theater escapade, had planned a diversion with the kindly idea of cheering me. They greeted my arrival with the announcement that they were hungry as bears waiting for me, and where under the canopy had I been this unconscionable time! And without giving me a chance to reply they announced further, that the Kilkenny Lads had engaged supper at Cato's and were waiting for us there. We must be off at once or they would conclude we were not coming and eat up the supper without us.

As Cato's was three miles out on the Boston Post Road, and as it was now nearly nine o'clock, there was no time to be lost in argument, and I yielded without a murmur, though a roystering supper, such as a supper at Cato's was bound to be, was the last thing I was in the humor for. We went on horseback, and Scipio and Mr. Kemble's black man rode ahead carrying torches, for the night was dark. It was Saladin's first experience with torches and he was inclined to be restive for awhile, but he soon quieted down, and as we swept swiftly along through the cool night air, sweet with the odors of spring and growing things, I was conscious of a feeling of keen regret that this was, probably, my last ride on Saladin. If I could persuade Mr. Moore we would start on our travels the day after the morrow and I hoped to find a packet sailing for home immediately on my return. There would be little chance for riding in the hurry of preparations, and I loved Saladin.

We found the rest of the Kilkenny Lads just ready to give us up, and we were greeted with shouts of welcome and hurried to the table, where Cato had outdone himself in setting before us all the spring delicacies and the special dishes for which he was so justly famous. Whether Moore would go with me or not I determined, as I took my seat, that this should be in the nature of a farewell banquet; I would start off on that tour alone, if I could get no one to go with me; I would not stay in New York, where either I must be a death's head at the festivities of my friends or must subject myself to such a strain of forced gayety as human heart and brain could not endure for long. For this one evening I put a tremendous pressure upon myself and I believe I was no damper on their hilarity.

Early in the feast I made my proposal to Moore.

"You have been talking of a tour to Niagara and Canada, Mr. Moore," I said, "and you once asked me to go with you. If you have not changed your mind and would still like me for a traveling companion, I am ready to start day after to-morrow."

"Good!" shouted Moore enthusiastically. "Your hand on that, Sir Lionel." But there was dead silence from the rest of the table, for a moment. I think they understood, and in their hearts they were feeling such sympathy with me, as prevented, for the moment, any expression. They were generous-hearted fellows; I had grown to love them in these nine months, and I believed they loved me.

It was Kemble who broke the silence, which was beginning to be embarrassing.

"You can see, Sir Lionel," he said, "that we 'Lads' are loath to let you go. We will be sorry to say good-by to Mr. Moore, also, on such short notice, but you have become a 'brother of our souls' and we cannot lightly let you go."

"If we could only go with you!" said Irving.

"Why not?" I asked. "Your law practice is not so pressing, is it, Irving, that you need stay home for it?"

A laugh always greeted any reference to Irving's practice. He had never yet had a case.

"I wish I could," said Irving, "but my family want me to go abroad; I was hoping I might have you and Moore for ship companions."

"Going abroad!" I exclaimed, for this was news to me. "Wait until we get back from our Canadian trip. I am hoping, by that time, to have received permission from my father to return and we will all go over together."

And so it was finally settled, the rest of the Kilkenny Lads professing themselves profoundly envious of Irving and Moore. We would be gone about ten weeks on our Canadian trip and on our return, provided I found the expected permission from my father, Irving, Moore and I would take the first packet for England. The supper became a farewell banquet in fact, and we were late into the night drinking farewell toasts to one another and rode home under the brilliant constellations, our flaring torches casting weirdly dancing shadows along our road, while we talked of the happy past and pledged a brother's love to each other and sang the German farewell song, with all the tender sentiment and sweet mournfulness that youth, untouched by the real sorrows of the world, loves to revel in.

I am not going to tell of our adventures, young Moore's and mine; they would fill a book by themselves. Suffice it to say that I discovered I had been wise in my plan. No companion could have been better for a man staggering under a weight of woe, than this light-hearted Irishman, bubbling over with wit and sentiment; finding poetry in every step of our road through the beautiful hills and valleys of this wonderful state; standing awe-struck and speechless before the tremendous downpour of the mighty Niagara; full of wonder at the splendor of the great river bearing its lovely thousand isles so lightly on its broad bosom; and swelling with pride in the beauty of Montreal and the quaint picturesqueness of Quebec, two English cities on this continent of America that an Englishman could well feel pride in.

We reached New York on the second of July, and there, in the pile of letters awaiting me at the City Tavern, none of which had been sent forward to me, since they could not have caught us on our flying trip, was one from my father that had reached New York just two days after Moore and I had started for Niagara, giving me the permission, I had so longed for, to return at once. His letter said that he was moved to the decision by two things: one was the report Captain Skinner gave him of the suffering I had endured in being imprisoned and brought to trial, and of which I had made light; the other was the threatening attitude of Bonaparte to the south coast. Should the French fleet really cross the channel and England be invaded, he knew that I would be very unhappy not to be at home to take a hand in the defense of Devonshire.

For a while it was hard to get over my disappointment that I should have missed this letter; I would have been home weeks ago if I had not rushed off in such haste to escape New York. And what made it harder to bear was that a packet had sailed the day before our return to New York, and now there would be none sailing again in weeks, for there were very few regular packets to England that summer, since the sea was full of French privateers and there were few skippers as daring as Captain Skinner, or so lucky as he had heretofore been.

Well, there was nothing to do but wait. In the meantime Moore and I were receiving invitations on all sides for visits. Paulding carried Moore off to his brother's place up the Hudson, but I preferred keeping my headquarters at the City Tavern and only going for dinner or for the night to my friends in turn. I had promised to spend the Fourth of July with Mr. Hamilton at the Grange and he had invited me, also, to the banquet of the Sons of Cincinnatus, for the evening of that day. Had I been an American, he told me, he would not have been at liberty to invite me, but since I was a foreigner he could do so.

It was rather odd to be assisting at a banquet celebrating England's defeat, for a Fourth of July banquet would have to be so regarded, but I had always been on the side of America in that question, and I could listen to the toasts and drink them heartily.

It was a notable company that sat down to table; many of them I knew, and most of the others I had heard of and was curious to see. Mr. Burr was there. I had met him the day after my return and he had invited me to spend the Fourth at Richmond Hill. I had the previous engagement at the Grange and I was not sorry. It seemed to me that Mr. Burr had changed in the few weeks since we had taken our ride together from Washington. He had seemed to me then the embodiment of careless good humor; he seemed to me, now, anxious and worried, and in the course of our short talk together I heard more bitter speeches from his lips than in all the time I had known him. I knew, of course, that he had lost the election for governor; Morgan Lewis had secured it, but that did not seem to me sufficient to account for what struck me as a great change in the gay, brilliant, fascinating Vice-president.

The banquet of the Cincinnati was a brilliant affair. Mr. Hamilton was president of the order, as the great Washington had been before him, and I cannot conceive a more delightful host or toastmaster, sparkling, brilliant, flashing with wit and humor, remembering everything and forgetting no one. In the light of what was soon to follow, Burr's answered challenge in his pocket, the manner of his presiding at that banquet has seemed to me since a most amazing exhibition of grit and real nerve. Mr. Burr, on the other hand, was unusually quiet. As a rule he would have had his own coterie around him keeping them all amused and absorbed in him, but that night he spent most of the evening quietly watching Hamilton.

Now Mr. Hamilton was no singer — there was but one song he ever sang — the Drum. But he had sung that song at every banquet of the Cincinnati for years and his old friends were not going to break into the tradition now. He demurred at first, I believe with some sense of the unfitness of it when he stood so close within the shadow, for I believe also that he never doubted the outcome of that duel. But he was prevailed upon, and in the spirit of glee, that boyish spirit that no burdens of state, no private sorrows, nor even the dark wing of the destroyer could shadow, he sprang on the table and sang it with all the lusty joy of youth. And as he sang, my glance fell on Burr who sat nearly opposite me. Every other face around that table was glowing with the spirit of conviviality and sympathy in the joy of the singer. Burr alone sat dark-browed, his arms folded, his eyes intently fixed in a keen and steady stare on Hamilton. Often since I have wondered what his thoughts could have been. Was he looking at Hamilton in all the flush of life and spirits and seeing him as he would be in a few days, cold and lifeless by his murderous hand? Did his soul draw back from the deed he was about to commit, or was he gloating over it with relentless hate, looking forward to the hour when this man, more loved, more idolized, than any man then living, should be no longer a stumbling-block in his path, the relentless closer of every door of opportunity?

As I saw Hamilton that night I can never forget him — the wonderful magnetic quality of the man was never more vividly manifested, every eye and every heart around that table, save only one, was irresistibly drawn to him as he sang, his dark curls flung back, his wonderful eyes glowing, his smiling lips parted, his slender, boyish figure swaying to the rhythm of his song. He had but one week of life left to him, and he knew it as certainly as if the decree of the executioner had gone forth, but his great soul had risen above the things of time and sense; he knew that he had lived much and well in his forty-seven years and he was unmoved in the midst of the rushing waves that were closing so swiftly about him.

I parted with him that night at the door of my tavern and the last words he ever said to me were the simple friendly words one might use to a friend he expected to see often:

"You must come out and stay with us before you sail, but lest I forget to tell you, I want you to say to your father that we are glad he loaned you to us for a while. If we could have more of such fair-minded young Englishmen coming to our shores, we would soon heal the breach between the two nations."

I had met Bayard again since my return and I had promised him to spend the night of the tenth with him and go out fishing with him early on the morning of the eleventh. We were out before sunrise and were fairly successful. It was a beautiful morning and many times we let our lines lie idly in the water, while we watched the wonderful effects of light and shadow on the river and the bay below. We were fishing on the Jersey side of the river, and we could look across to the tree-embowered city, where we could readily distinguish the porches and pillars of the Grange to the north, and almost equally distant to the south the roofs and chimneys of Richmond Hill, while half way between them hung the golden lantern of the morning star, paling as the dawn rapidly brightened. It was a picture of perfect peace and beauty and I was reminded of my early crossing on the Paulus Hook Ferry nearly a year before, when the same panorama had unrolled itself before my eyes.

I was speaking of it to young Bayard when we both noticed a boat put out from the Richmond Hill landing and make for the Jersey shore not very far from where we were anchored. We watched it idly, not being able, at that distance, to distinguish the occupants of the boat, when young Bayard exclaimed:

"Strange! there is another boat setting out from the Grange headed for exactly the same spot, I should think, and with exactly three men, not counting the rower, in each boat."

I looked quickly, and a chill struck my heart as I looked. I think the same foreboding seized Bayard at the same moment, for when I looked at him his face was pale and his eyes were dilated as if with fear.

"Do you think it could be a duel? and who?" I asked.

"They came from the Grange and from Richmond Hill," he answered in a whisper, as if his tongue refused to utter the dreadful suspicion aloud.

Neither of us spoke another word, but with every nerve tense we sat and watched the two boats gradually drawing nearer each other. I do not think any one in either boat noticed us, for we were in the shadow of the shore and the men in the boats were, no doubt, intensely preoccupied. The boat from Richmond Hill reached the landing-place first, but before it reached it, we both distinctly recognized Burr and young Van Ness; the third man we did not recognize but we supposed him to be a physician. The other boat, from the Grange, must pass us in order to reach the landing-place, though at some distance out in the river.

"Oh, Bayard," I groaned, "what right have we to sit here and let that man, one of the noblest men God ever made, go to his death. Oh, if we only dared stop him!"

But Bayard said nothing. He knew the hideous conventions of the murderous practice were too strong for us — we were as men with their hands tied.

As the boat passed us, Hamilton's voice, clear and beautiful as a musical instrument touched by a master's hand, floated to us distinctly over the wide channel of intervening waters.

"I shall not fire, Pendleton," he said. "I could not honorably refuse the encounter, but I will have no man's blood upon my head."

Every minute seemed an hour to us after that second boat had reached the landing, and its occupants had disappeared among the trees on a terrace a little above the river. I could not endure the suspense, and I could see no reason why we should not drop down beside the two boats fastened to the landing. As we came up, Dr. Hosack was in one of them and recognized Bayard. The physician in the other boat scowled at us, but Hosack seemed glad to see us.

"Bayard," he exclaimed hurriedly, "if anything happens to Hamilton will you row over to your father's house and have it ready to receive him? The Grange is too far and it would never do to bring him home to his wife without notice."

There was no time for a reply, for at that moment there was the sharp report of a pistol and Hosack and the other physician sprang up the steep sides of the embankment. A moment later the second physician with Van Ness, shielding a third man from sight with an umbrella, came scrambling hastily down the bank, sprang into their boat and pulled hurriedly for Richmond Hill.

I looked at Bayard, his face was blanched with terror, as I am sure was mine.

"Bayard," I said, "I must go to him — will you hold the boat?"

He nodded and I sprang up the bank, meeting Pendleton and Dr. Hosack bearing him between them. I thought him dead at first, for he had fainted, but as I took hold to help bear him as gently as possible down the steep bank, he opened his eyes and smiled, then fainted again. Tears were running down Pendleton's cheeks and Hosack's, and Bayard was sobbing aloud as we laid him tenderly in the boat, his head and shoulders supported in Pendleton's arms. Then I sprang into Bayard's boat and together we pulled, with all our strength, for his father's house, almost directly across the river.

We reached it long before the others. A room was made ready for him, at once, on the lower floor, and Mr. Bayard and young Bayard and I hurried down to the river bank to help bring him to the house. As we lifted him in our arms he regained consciousness for a moment, and his first thought was of Mrs. Hamilton.

"Let someone tell my wife," he said, "but do not let her despair; do not let her know there is no hope."

He lapsed into unconsciousness again immediately, and how reverently we bore him! To be allowed to bear my part in the burden of that slight form seemed to me an honor above my deserts.

Many sad duties fell to me that day. No horse in the Bayard stables was as fleet as Saladin; it was for me to bear the tidings to the Grange. Over and over as Saladin and I flew along the four interminable miles, I said to myself—"How can I tell her! How can I tell her and yet give her hope!"

But at the very gates of the Grange I met, as I had met them the first time I entered those gates, Mr. Troup and Mr. Morris. Their suspicions had been aroused by something Mr. Hamilton had said the day before, and they had ridden over early from Morrisania to see if all was well with the friend dear to their hearts. To break the news to these friends of years was almost as hard as to break it to his family. Never before and never since have I seen two strong men utterly break down and sob like children. How men loved him!

But I could leave Mrs. Hamilton and the family to them and I rode back like the wind to the Bayard mansion, fearful of the tidings that might await me there, but anxious to be of any possible service. The news had spread, and already an anxious crowd of friends was gathered on the lawn, waiting silently and tearfully for tidings. Till late in the morning Saladin and I were flying between the Bayard mansion and the city, on errands for the doctors, and not until there was nothing more that I could do did I go back to the City Tavern for breakfast. I had been up since four, and the great strain of all these hours had left me exhausted.

At the door of the tavern I met Irving, and he greeted me in his usual jovial way.

"What's all the fuss about, Sir Lionel?" he asked. "Is it war with France, or England?" for the streets were full of excited men.

I looked at him, stupefied for a moment.

"Is it possible you've not heard?" I asked.

"Heard what?" he asked, but soberly enough now, for he could see that some dreadful thing had happened.

"Mr. Burr shot Mr. Hamilton this morning, and Mr. Hamilton is dying," I said slowly, uttering the words with difficulty.

For a moment Irving turned deadly pale, then the angry blood rushed to his face in a flood.

"It's a lie," he exclaimed hotly. "I beg your pardon," he added hastily, as he saw the quick resentment leap to my eyes. "But it is all a horrible mistake! It is impossible! I have just come from Richmond Hill, where I breakfasted with Mr. Burr. I often breakfast with him, for the sake of the early morning walk, and never have I seen him calmer or more entertaining, than he was at breakfast this morning."

"It is not possible!" I exclaimed, using his own words, and horror-struck at the picture of the murderer, calmly entertaining a friend at breakfast, his hands reeking with blood.

"At what hour did you breakfast?" I added abruptly, thinking it possible they had breakfasted before the duel.

"I reached Richmond Hill at half-past eight, and found Mr. Burr reading in his library. He said he had just had his bath and he invited me out to breakfast at once. Oh, no, it is not possible!"

I knew how Irving loved Burr. He was one of the young men who were completely fascinated by the brilliant Vice-president. Moreover, he had once been very much in love with Theodosia and had transferred something of his tenderness for the daughter to the father. I knew how he would suffer when he realized the truth, for he loved Hamilton, too, and honored him above all men.

"Oh, Irving, it is too true!" I groaned. "I was there to see. I saw Burr flee from the dueling ground; I helped to carry Hamilton to the Bayard mansion, where he is dying."

His face was pitiful to see. I think sometimes that those faces that are used to be "wreathed in jollity" are the saddest of all faces when sorrow strikes them down. I took him to my room, where I had an egg, a piece of toast and a cup of coffee sent up, and then, together, we went back and joined that waiting throng on the lawn at the Bayards. All that day and all that night and far into the next day it stood there patiently waiting for the tiniest scrap of tidings from the man it idolized. I do not mean that all the men stood there all that time. Men were coming and going, yes, and many women, too, but always was that waiting throng. And if anyone came through the doors like Gouverneur Morris, or Troup, or Matthew Clarkson, any one who, they knew, had come from his bedside, they gathered around him and begged for some word of hope. But there was never any hope. Morris and Troup with the tears rushing unheeded from their eyes talked to the throng of the agony he suffered and the brave way he bore it; and how he comforted the wife who would not be comforted; and how he opened his eyes, just once, and looked at his seven weeping children and closed them again—he could not bear the sight. And strong men sobbed aloud as they listened.

And then at two o'clock the next day the end came, and those of us who had hoped against hope, had to yield at last.

In the splendor of a great pageant he was borne to his grave. All party strife was forgotten. Federalist, Republican and Democrat vied to do him honor. The Order of the Cincinnati, most aristocratic of societies, and the Order of Tammany, the young Republican revolt against such Federal aristocracy, were both in line. Behind his soldier's bier, two black men robed in white, with white turbans, led his gray charger, boots and spurs hanging reversed from the saddle. And behind all the orders and all the societies and all the great dignitaries of the land, followed a long line of weeping citizens.

Well might they weep! For as Gouverneur Morris said, as he stood with Hamilton's boys about him before the open grave, and uttered the brief and impassioned funeral oration:

"I declare to you, before that God in whose presence we are now so especially assembled, that in his most private and confidential conversation, his sole subject of discussion was your freedom and your happiness. He never lost sight of your interests."

In all these sad days Irving had been my almost constant companion. Each day, however, he slipped away for an hour or two, and I never asked him where he had been when he returned, for I knew that he had been with Aaron Burr. And thinking of the brilliant man, who so coveted honor and loved the adulation of his fellow men, sitting alone, in disgrace with all men, even his friends, I could find it in my heart to pity him. I would not go to see him; he had been kind to me many times, but I could not bear the thought of ever looking upon his face again.

The funeral was on the fourteenth; on Monday, the sixteenth, Irving, Moore and I were to sail with Captain Skinner for England, for Captain Skinner had returned to New York ten days before and now he was ready for the hazardous return trip. The expresses that flashed out of the city in every direction, the moment Hamilton's death was announced, had brought every man of any note, within a possible distance, to the city. Mr. Jay was there, all the Livingstons, Van Rensselaers, Van Cortlandt's, everybody, and among them my young friend William Jay from school in New Haven. It gave me a chance to deliver Saladin into his own hands and to bid him good-by. He had grown taller and more manly in the months since I had seen him, and I liked the way he grasped my hand

and looked straight into my eyes, though his voice was not quite steady as he said, "Either you are coming back to New York or I am going to England before two years are over. I cannot lightly give up a friend I have so learned to love."

I was uttering many good-bys those last two days and they saddened me greatly. The Cockloft Hall boys spent that Saturday evening after the funeral with me quietly in my rooms; there was no thought of revelry in the mind of any one of us, so heavy lay the pall of grief for Hamilton on all our hearts.

We were to go aboard the *Sea Gull* on Sunday evening, since the tide would be at the flood early the next morning and the *Sea Gull* must take advantage of it. The Kilkenny Lads and William Jay and young Mr. Cooper were to go down to the boat with us and see us comfortably settled, and I had arranged with Captain Skinner that we should have a little supper served in the cabin — a melancholy farewell banquet. Irving had gone out in the afternoon to Richmond Hill, for a last visit, but he promised to be with us in time for supper.

The hour came and passed, and Irving had not come. It was long past, and still he had not come. We sat out on the deck in the warm summer air, the waters quietly lapping the sides of the vessel, a faint breeze gently stirring the shrouds, and the lights of the city, one by one, dropping out, as the hour grew later. His brothers, Peter and Ebenezer, were visibly uneasy, and I was myself much troubled, and to divert our minds I asked the captain to serve our supper on deck, without waiting longer for Irving. Since the trial there was nothing Captain Skinner would not do for me, be the trouble small or great, and he set about serving it with alacrity, having first made our part of the deck light as day, by fixing flaring torches into linkholes made for the purpose. The good captain had outdone himself in his supper, and we were young, with the healthy appetites of young men, and neither the sorrow we had been through, nor the sadness of an approaching parting could dull our appetites.

We lingered at our little feast, peering constantly into the black depths beyond the circle of light from the flaming torches to catch a glimpse of Irving, but it was long after midnight when we heard his step on the wharf, and a moment later he appeared in our circle of light. It was a worn and wan specter of the gay Irving who threw himself into a seat with the air of one who is too exhausted to move another step.

"Lads," he said, struggling to speak calmly, "he is gone! We got him off in a boat from the foot of the garden with the greatest difficulty. The warrant is out for his arrest, and the house was watched by the officers.

"And God knows what will become of him alone on the sea all night in an open boat!" he exclaimed passionately with quivering lip.

For a long moment no one spoke. I knew not what was in the hearts of the others, but I was looking off over the dark waters of the bay, and thinking of the lonely refugee, fleeing from the face of justice, alone on that wide, black sea, and I said to myself, "By his death the great Hamilton has disarmed and rendered helpless the one foe he feared as a deadly menace to the safety of his idolized country. He has given his life for his adopted land!"

XXXII

THE ADORABLE MISS LIVINGSTON

WE weighed anchor at the first turn of the tide next morning and went down the harbor on the full flood. It was very early, but the dawn was breaking and I was out on deck to see the last of those shores which I was so urgent to leave, and yet, to which, in my eleven months' sojourn, I had become strangely attached.

Moore and Irving came out and joined me just as we turned the keel of the island and swept round under full sail by The Battery. Trinity spire was beginning to catch a faint rosy glow from the east; beneath its shadow slept the greatest man in America, whom I had learned to love well, and close by stood the City Tavern, my home through most of these months. The trees on the Battery and the little green beyond were standing out with the vividness of painted trees in that clear light that precedes the sunrise; at the head of that little green was Mr. Livingston's house where I lay ill of the fever and Mademoiselle nursed me (though I knew it not at the time) at the risk of her life; and on that little green we stood together that icy Thanksgiving morning and watched Van Arsdale fasten the flag to the liberty pole. As we came farther round the island we saw the Paulus Hook Ferry, starting out on its first morning trip, and I remembered our early crossing, when Lloyd and I rode down to breakfast at Liberty Hall and saved Mademoiselle from being dashed to death on Saladin's back. Every object on those fast-receding shores, where I had known and loved her, spoke loudly to me of her, but most of all to be standing on the *Sea Gull's* deck and watching those familiar shores slip away, as eleven months before, side by side, we had watched them (new then, and strange) come gliding into view, was so powerful a reminder of her that it was hard to stand there making perfunctory speeches to Moore and Irving about the city —"a gay little Paris"— and the harbor —"the most beautiful in the world."

As we sailed farther down the harbor Irving begged the captain to lend him his glass and he swept the waters toward the Jersey coast anxiously. At last he seemed to see something; he held his glass steady for a full minute, then he handed it to me.

"Look, Sir Lionel," he said. "I am sure it is he!" and his voice trembled as he spoke.

I looked and saw a man, a common water-side man, rowing an open skiff with one passenger seated in the stern. There was no mistaking the peculiar stoop of the passenger's shoulders — it was Burr. He had been all night on the water and now that day was breaking they were running into the Kill von Kull and making for the little village of Elizabeth. I handed the glass back to Irving. Now that I had located the boat I could follow it without the aid of the glass, and as we watched it, we saw it make a landing and saw the passenger with the unmistakable stoop, step ashore and take his lonely way toward the little village. He disappeared in a few minutes behind a plantation of young oaks. Irving dropped the glass, through which he was still gazing intently, and furtively brushed away a tear as he turned to hand it to the captain; and I hardly knew whether it was with more loathing or pity that I had looked my last on the Vice-president of the United States.

While we had been watching him the day had brightened rapidly, the whole heavens were a glow of rose and saffron, and as I had sailed into that harbor over an opal-tinted sea, so over an opal-tinted sea, I sailed out of it, leaving the rosy glow behind us, and passing into a gray world of somber mists and clouds.

There could have been no better ship companions for a melancholy man than the two Providence had given me. They were twin spirits, though one ran more to a sparkling wit that enchanted me, and the other to a genial humor that warmed the very cockles of my heart. Yet much as I delighted in them both, it was sometimes a great relief to get away from them for awhile and indulge in the melancholy pleasure of a reverie of the past. I loved best to get far out in the very bow of the boat, where the waves, parted by our swift prow, dashed up in foam and fret against the sides of the vessel and often showered me with their diamond spray. It was in that spot I had had a memorable talk with Miss Desloge and it came to me there, as a sudden and strange revelation, that the man who sat there dreaming of her was in every way a very different creature from the boy who sat and talked with her a year ago in the same spot. How light and foolish, now, looked my boyish passion for Peggy! This love I bore for Mademoiselle was no more to be likened to it than the great swell of the mighty Atlantic, thousands of miles broad and fathomless in depth was to be compared with the light froth that dashed impotently against the staunch vessel's prow.

Though I hope it was not evident to Irving and Moore (I certainly struggled hard against any betrayal of it) I was fast falling into a settled melancholy, and the reason for it was the utter hopelessness of my passion. I thought then that no man had ever been in quite so desperate a case. Had it simply been that she did not love me, I could have set to work to win her love; had it been, as I once believed, that she loved me but was unwilling to marry outside of her native land, I was confident I could, in time, have overcome that objection. And, but for this war with Bonaparte, even her sudden, unannounced departure would not have daunted me; I would have followed her to France and convinced her. But if this war was to last fifteen years, as the last had done, then indeed it was a hopeless outlook.

Going over this ceaseless treadmill of reasoning, far out in the bow one morning, I made a sudden vow — Be it fifteen years, or longer, I will go to France when this war is ended and find her. And feeling the better for my vow I went back to Moore and Irving in lighter spirits than I had been since that day in Miss Livingston's drawing-room when she told me Mademoiselle had sailed.

Our voyage was an uneventful one. Moore and Irving proved fair sailors, only succumbing to the sickness for a few days when the gales struck us up among the roaring forties. Once a French privateer sighted us and gave chase, but Captain Skinner unlimbered the swivel at the stern of the boat, sent a shot across the Frenchman's bows and then, the *Sea Gull* showing a clean pair of heels, we were soon out of sight.

At a little port on the west coast of France we landed Irving; he was bound, by way of Paris, for Italy, but he was to be in England by Christmas, and there was little room for regret at the parting on either side, since he was all excitement at the thought of Rome and Venice, and I at the thought of home. My excitement grew with every hour, for it was not many hours after saying good-by to Irving until we had left the coast of France and were making a straight crossing for Clover Combe. All the little village was out to see the landing of the *Sea Gull;* they had been watching for it for days, and as I stood on the deck, while the sailors were slowly heaving the big ship ahead to lay her snugly by the little wharf, crowded with the old friends of my boyhood — weather-beaten fishermen, their smiling wives and pretty daughters from the village; keepers, foresters, farmers and house-servants from the Court — I saw my father, his fine head bared, with its handsome crop of curls just touched with frost, looking not a day older than that day I saw him last standing on the great wharf at Greenwich looking up at me, as he was looking up at me now from the little wharf at Clover Combe, his eyes shining with the strongest, truest and finest emotion earth knows — a father's love for his son.

. . . .

I had been at home a week, and every day Aunt Pamela (dear Aunt Pamela, who kissed me and wept over me, scolded me and flattered me, all in a breath, as she came running out on the south terrace to meet me) every day she said to me — "*When* are you going to call on your neighbor of Broadfields?"

"Very soon," I always answered her smilingly, "I 'm waiting for my new uniform, you know."

And indeed I intended to call soon, nor was I waiting for my uniform; an indefinable shyness or dread, I knew not which, made me put it off from day to day.

It was at dinner, on the afternoon of our arrival, that Aunt Pamela told me her wonderful piece of news — Rosamond Dufour had returned to Broadfields! She confessed that she had been bursting with it for the entire three hours that we had been on land, but had saved it for a place and opportunity befitting such an announcement. We were having dinner on the great south terrace, sheltered from the late afternoon sun by a beech copse on the west, and catching glimpses of the sea through openings in the oaks and lindens of the park to the south. It was an old Clover Combe custom to have dinner on the south terrace on fine days in summer, and young Mr. Moore (who was spending the night with me but could be prevailed upon to delay his setting out for London no longer than the next morning) was extravagant in his praise of the views, the air, the beeches, the oaks, and most of all the dining out of doors. We had only been on shore three hours, but in that three hours I had tried to visit as many of my old haunts as possible and I had kept young Moore rushing from stables to kennels, from park to garden, from deer preserve to rabbit warren; dragging him upstairs to show him my favorite Sir Joshua hanging in the north corridor, and downstairs to the library to give him a glimpse of my father's treasures — Elzevirs, rare old editions, wonderfully tooled bindings. I was like a child home from Rugby with a schoolmate, to whom he must show all his treasures the first moment of his arrival.

We were in a fitting frame of mind and body, therefore, to enjoy the quiet of dinner, a cool breeze from the sea blowing up through the park to the terrace, and the long shadows lying on the turf, whose like I had not seen in America, of so rich a green, so deep and velvety.

I had shown sufficient surprise to please Aunt Pamela at her bit of news.

"Rosie Dufour!" I exclaimed. "How long has she been here? How did she get through the lines?"

It was my father who answered.

"She has been home several weeks. I don't think she found much difficulty in getting through; there are ways of managing it, I suppose."

"And is she — is she any better looking than she was as a child?" I asked.

"She was always good looking," my aunt answered promptly. "Rosie Dufour was a very pretty child."

"Perhaps so, if you like red hair," I answered; "but I suppose I was too young to be a judge of beauty."

"Her hair has darkened with the years; I think you might call her very good-looking," my father said with a twinkling eye, "but you can judge for yourself when you see her."

The talk very naturally drifted back to our childhood days, Rosie's and mine, and the pranks she was continually playing, until Mr. Moore insisted that he felt a very lively interest as to how a child of that kind had grown up; he was greatly tempted to postpone London for a day or two and see for himself.

However, the temptation was not strong enough; he was off the next morning, and he was hardly out of the house before Aunt Pamela had asked me if I was going to call at Broadfields that morning, a question which she repeated daily, and I answered every day in the same fashion.

It had been a busy week. Even if I had been greatly interested in my neighbor (and I said to myself I could never again feel interest in any woman) I would have found it difficult to make the time for the call. I had found my captain's commission awaiting me on my return home; in one month I was to report at Portsmouth. It had been a great disappointment to my father that I had not received his letter earlier — I would have been home ten weeks sooner and had ten weeks more to spend with him before setting out for the seat of war. Now the time was so short that most of it must be occupied in preparations.

My father knew the story of Mademoiselle's abrupt departure, and that I had never had a chance to make the proposal he had given me his consent to make; I had written it to him briefly, just before setting out with Mr. Moore for Niagara. I thought I had seen in his eyes since my return that he wanted to have a talk with me about it, and I was not surprised, therefore, when he asked me to come into his library almost immediately after Mr. Moore's departure.

He did not begin on it at once; he had many things to say of my coming of age, which would be in October (and I told him I had spent my twentieth birthday in the Bridewell) but he came around to it at last.

"My son," he said, "I want you to know that you have my sympathy in your trouble. I have heard that Miss Desloge was in every way worthy, and though you know I had set my heart on Broadfields and Rosamond Dufour, I would have welcomed gladly a daughter whom, from all accounts, you had so wisely chosen."

This was much for my father to say; he was a man of few words where matters of the heart were concerned, and I was touched by his sympathy and could only respond by bowing my head. He went on with more hesitation, seeing, I suppose, that I was deeply moved, and feeling, I thought, the delicacy one would feel in speaking of any other woman to a man who has just lost his dearest friend by death.

"About Miss Dufour, Lionel," he said gently, "of course I know that you are in no mood to be calling on the ladies, but I think a formal call of courtesy on your old friend and nearest neighbor is due her, and hard as it may be to bring your mind to such a duty, I believe you will be the better for making the effort. After your first call you need see no more of her than you like."

Of course I readily promised my father to make the call, and I intended to do so at once, but, as I said before, either from shyness or dread, I kept putting it off, and a whole week had passed when it suddenly occurred to me that Rosamond Dufour was a friend, a dear friend, of Miss Desloge. We would at least have a topic of conversation of mutual interest, and it was possible I might hear of her safe arrival in Paris and her address there — for I had been too dazed at first to think of asking Miss Livingston for it, and later I could not bring my mind to approach Miss Livingston upon any subject; so dreadful seemed to me the cruelty of temper that had forced a young girl to flee from her protection in haste. For I had never doubted that Miss Livingston had compelled Mademoiselle to this course and compelled her, I had the presumption to think, because she found in her too formidable a rival to her own hopes.

It was not an hour after it had so suddenly occurred to me that Miss Dufour was Miss Desloge's friend that I found myself crossing the park to the familiar gap in the high hedge that separated the park from Broadfields. It had been a long time since I had entered the house; it had been closed for years, and I was interested, in spite of myself, to note the evidences of taste — the taste of a young lady, and French at that — with which the small drawing-room was furnished. Books, pictures, flowers, a work table on which lay a piece of fine needlework, evidently hastily laid down, an open piano, with a song that I had heard Miss Desloge sing and greatly admired, on the rack.

The long windows were open and I had hardly seated myself when through them, from the lawn, bounded a handsome collie with a magnificent white ruff and waistcoat. His head was turned as if expecting someone to follow him and I rose to my feet feeling quite sure Miss Dufour was about to enter, and feeling, quite unexpectedly, a queer, trembling excitement at the thought of seeing my little playfellow.

But I was mistaken; the dazzling vision that ran lightly across the lawn and through the window, evidently in a romp with the collie, and of whom I saw nothing distinctly but a confused blur of red-gold curls and glowing dark eyes, was not Miss Dufour!

The vision came to a sudden stop just inside the window, startled by my unexpected appearance.

"You here!" I gasped, and for the life of me could not utter another word, nor, for a moment, move a muscle. Then as I saw the swift blood rushing in a flood over the creamy whiteness of face and neck, I stepped quickly forward, both hands extended; but before I reached her I stopped short, and let my hands fall to my side. I remembered she had left me without a word of explanation or farewell; she had been coming straight to my native land to make my childhood's friend a visit, and yet, not a hint of it to me. It must be that she desired to make this visit while I was in a distant land, thus securing her from all possibility of intrusion from me. Perhaps she feared that if I had known she was coming, I would either have returned with her on the *Sea Gull* or taken the first ship following.

All this flashed through my mind with the swiftness of the lightning. Instead of seizing her hands, as I had started to do, I made her a very low bow.

"Mademoiselle's methods are inscrutable," I said; "I should have supposed it would have been only natural to confide to a friend, who I believe has proved his sincerity, her intention of visiting a friend of hers who was also a very old friend of his."

She curtsied deeply in response. A demure dimple was playing hide and seek just where the double curves of the scarlet lips met each other. The dark lashes were lying on the soft rose of the rounded cheek. I could not see whether they hid that familiar twinkle, but I was very sure they did — and I knew not why.

"Sir Lionel," she said, still with downcast eyes, "it is possible to be the victim of circumstances, is it not?"

"Mademoiselle!" I cried, sure now that Miss Livingston had compelled her to go and would not permit her to communicate with me. "Mademoiselle, it was all Miss Livingston's doing, was it not?"

And as I spoke I seized her hand in both of mine and held it close.

"Yes," she said demurely, "it was all Miss Livingston's doing," and then she made a faint struggle to release her hand, to which I paid no attention, except to hold it closer.

"I knew it!" I cried. "The cruelest, most heartless of women! Oh, Mademoiselle, you cannot be happier than I am to see you free of her tyranny. And listen to me, look at me, I beg"— one fleeting glance she gave me, but her eyes fell instantly, as if she could not bear the flame in mine. "Do not tell me again that you will never marry anyone but a Frenchman. My father is waiting to welcome you as a daughter. Will you come?"

Her color grew steadily deeper and the hand I held trembled in my clasp, but she made a brave effort to answer me.

"I never said that I would marry none but a Frenchman," she said shyly, with a half glance at me and that mocking dimple peeping at me from its hiding place.

"Never said so!" I echoed, and could not understand her at all. Had I been mad all these months! Then I drew myself up as straight and as tall as I could make myself, and let her hand drop.

"Mademoiselle," I said formally, "I have the honor to offer you the hand of an Englishman. Will you accept it? His heart has been so long in your keeping, it is not his to offer."

She glanced up at me quickly and shyly once more, and then her head drooped, but she said not a word.

"Mademoiselle, I implore you, answer me!" I entreated. "I have sent up my name to Miss Dufour and she may come in upon us at any moment, and, glad as I shall be to see my old friend, I could not endure the suspense of talking to her and not knowing your answer."

She lifted her head and looked straight at me. There was the old, saucy, familiar twinkle dancing an Irish jig in her beautiful eyes and her scarlet lips were curving into a bewitching smile. Something in the smile, in the familiar twinkle, and the familiar surroundings — it took the combination of all three — penetrated my stupid brain.

"Why! WHY!! WHY!!!" I cried, each exclamation more intense than the last, "*you* are Miss Dufour!" and I sprang toward her, thinking all my troubles were ended. But she drew herself up quite tall and stately.

"Yes," she said, with the air of an empress, "I am Rosamond Dufour, 'that red-headed, freckle-faced baby!'"

"Oh, Rosamond," I groaned, "you surely will not hold that against me!" And was going on to plead my cause but I stopped short.

"Why are you masquerading under a false name?" I inquired severely. And without waiting for her answer, for another suggestion had flashed into my mind —

"Did not Mr. La Force know your name was Dufour? he always called you Mademoiselle Desloge."

"Will you be seated, Sir Lionel?" with the smile and the tone of a gracious hostess to a comparative stranger, "and permit me to be seated also? Then we can talk it over at our ease."

She led the way as she spoke to some seats near the windows that opened onto the lawn on the side of the house looking toward Clover Combe Court, the tops of whose towers, a mile away, rising above the tall trees of the park, I could catch a glimpse of through the open windows. It was through the southern windows, looking toward the sea that she and the collie had made their entrance.

I think I had been more at my ease standing. For the first time I began to feel embarrassed — I had had no time for embarrassment up to this moment, one intense emotion had succeeded the other so swiftly. I had asked two questions, and as yet she had answered neither. I said nothing further, but having seated myself, I looked at her, waiting for a reply.

"Monsieur," she said, and corrected herself quickly, "Sir Lionel, I am masquerading under no false name. You have forgotten, perhaps, that my family name is Desloge — Dufour. In England, as is the custom, I am called Miss Dufour; in France, also according to custom, I am called Mademoiselle Desloge. Mr. La Force never knew me by any other title, except that he knew my name was Rosamond — you seem not to have known, or cared, whether I had any baptismal name."

"No," I said wonderingly, "I never even thought of it — to me you were always 'Mademoiselle.' And Mademoiselle," I added quickly (I was not sure but I liked the title quite as well as Rosamond) "Mademoiselle, how did the mistress of Broadfields, and an heiress in her own right, happen to hire herself out to service with an American? And to endure such insults and contumely — it is difficult to understand."

"Sir Lionel, do you like Miss Livingston?"

"I detest her!" I snapped.

"Do you suppose that I like her?"

"I should suppose that you had more reason to detest her than I. No,"— correcting myself —"not so great reason; she was cruel, tyrannical, insulting to one I love much more than she loves herself."

She only noticed my speech with a fleeting blush.

"Monsieur," she said fervently, "I adore her! And I will never love any man who does not adore her also."

"You make it hard for me, Mademoiselle," I answered. "You demand of me the labors of Hercules. Besides, there is only one woman I could ever adore; nor should I suppose that woman would want me to adore another."

"O not in the same way, of course," with another light blush. "But you ought to adore her, for you owe her much."

"You speak in riddles, Mademoiselle. I believe I owe her much, but it is in the way of retribution, not gratitude."

"I speak in riddles, still more have I acted in riddles, now I am going to unriddle them for you. I was never in service to Miss Livingston; I have never earned a penny in my life."

"You and Miss Livingston have deliberately deceived me, then!" I exclaimed hotly. "For what purpose, pray?"

"You speak hard words, sir," flushing in her turn; "I am not compelled to unriddle my riddle, and if you are to take it in that humor I will let it stand as it is."

"Mademoiselle," I entreated quickly, "forgive me. I have not yet that complete control of a hasty temper that I am striving for. I appreciate greatly the kindness you are doing me and I pray you go on."

"Very well, then," with a smile of comprehension. "It all came about in an accidental way, with no intention of deceiving. Miss Livingston and I have been for several years very close friends, ever since she came to Paris with her father and was entered as a pupil at the convent of Les Soeurs Angeliques. When her education was finished she desired greatly to go home to America, rather than remain in Paris with the rest of the family, and her father sent her home under the care of Mrs. Pomeroy. She begged me to go home with her, for a long visit, but there were reasons then," said Mademoiselle hesitating and blushing brightly, "why I did not wish to go so far from home. Afterwards my affairs changed, and I wrote her I would come. About the time I made my decision, your uncle wrote to Mr. Livingston in Paris telling him of your father's plan of sending you to America and asked him for letters of introduction."

"So you knew I was going to America?" I interrupted her. "Did you know I would be on the *Sea Gull?*"

"No, and I was terribly startled when you first came to the table and Captain Skinner introduced you as Sir Lionel Marchmont. I thought you would recognize me and Miss Livingston's plan would be spoiled."

"Miss Livingston's plan!" I echoed. "What did Miss Livingston have to do with it?"

"Oh, I had written her of your intended visit, and that your father was sending you to America because of an unfortunate love affair, and—"

But I interrupted her again.

"Then you knew about Peggy all the time?" I demanded.

"No, not about Peggy. Your uncle only said 'an unfortunate love affair.' Miss Livingston knew of you; I had often spoken of my playmate 'Lion,' and her quick brain devised a scheme that was to make you forget Peggy. I was to be, in public, Miss Livingston's maid, or paid companion. She was to treat me haughtily or tyrannically, and Miss Livingston said: 'If Sir Lionel did not forget his unfortunate love in his interest in the poor, downtrodden dependent, he was not worth being interested in!'"

Now I understood all that had puzzled me on the *Sea Gull;* why she avoided meeting me as much as possible; why she treated me so coldly when we met, and especially I understood that strange glance that I had attributed to French coquetry.

But there were other things still more interesting to me in her story. It had all been told with such hesitation and embarrassment as delighted me greatly. Was she not betraying with every word that they had formed a plot to win my love? All this time that I had been thinking myself the ardent wooer I was, in fact, being wooed.

"And so," I said, "while I was so wrought up over your sufferings, you and Miss Livingston were laughing in your sleeves at me."

She looked a little shamefaced.

"Oh, no, not laughing," she said quickly, "we — admired your generous spirit."

"Now that I recall it, I heard you laughing at me once when I passed your door at Clermont. It was after Miss Livingston had been especially brutal and I had told you that I would not stay under her roof another day."

"I know," she said, looking still more shamefaced. "I was often afraid we were carrying it too far, and I was often sorry for you."

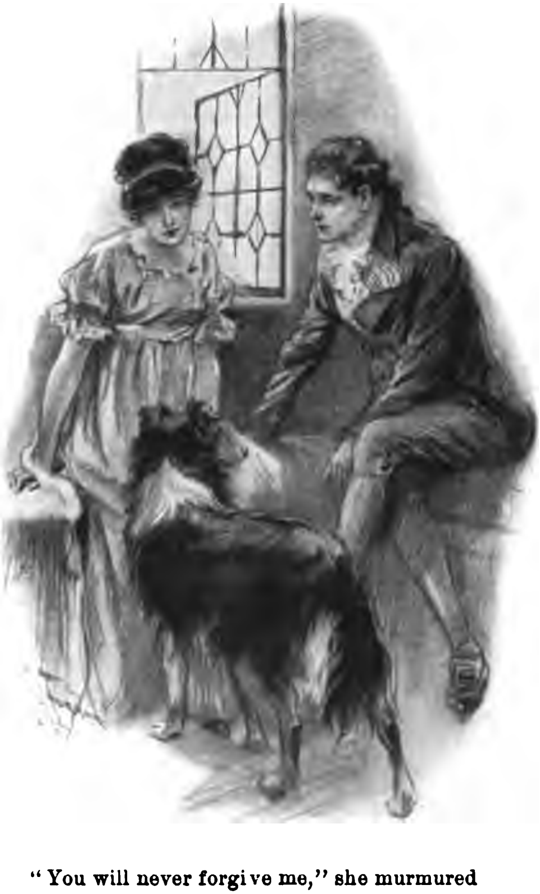
"No man likes to be made a fool of, I suppose you know, Mademoiselle," I said sternly.

She looked the picture of distress. "You will never forgive me," she murmured.

"I never ought to, but I will," I answered. "I find I can't help forgiving you anything, which is very weak and foolish of me. But Miss Livingston — I am not sure I will forgive her."

"You have nothing to forgive her — she sacrificed herself most nobly for your sake."

"I believe that is true," I answered slowly, "for she made herself appear, not to me alone, but to any who happened to be



" You will never forgive me," she murmured

present, in a most unamiable light. I wonder Kemble's interest in her could survive it."

"Oh, Mr. Kemble knew," she said demurely.

"Mr. Kemble KNEW!" I exclaimed. "And pray, how many more knew that I was being made a fool of?" I asked, inwardly seething, but outwardly calm.

"Mayor Livingston knew, of course, and Mr. Hamilton — there was no one else; though I object to your twice-uttered expression — there was no thought of making a fool of you."

Her voice had a steely ring that I did not like on her last words. A new idea flashed into my head.

"Mademoiselle, your leaving New York, then, so suddenly, and without a word to me, was not because Miss Livingston was angry and compelled you to go?"

"No."

"Why did you go?"

"Sir Lionel," she said petulantly, "I have been very patient under your catechism, but my patience is not inexhaustible."

I was silent a moment; I thought I understood. It flashed into my mind that the whole plot had been a contrivance of Miss Livingston's to give Rosamond an opportunity of seeing and knowing her old playmate without herself being known; that in so doing she could judge for herself what manner of man he was. I believed that in so judging, she had finally come to the conclusion that he was not a man after her own heart, but, in the meanwhile, Miss Livingston's scheme had worked too well: the man was madly in love with the poor dependent and her only way of getting rid of him was to escape for home without his knowledge. I thought, also, that I knew exactly what had destroyed the liking she had certainly felt for me at first: it was the unfavorable report she had heard of my doings in New York before Thanksgiving, and that still more unfortunate night at the theater. She believed me a drinking-man and a brawler, no doubt, and my note of explanation had not convinced her.

This was a terrible blow to me. Having found her when I thought I had lost her forever, my spirits had flown to the highest heaven and I believed all my troubles ended; it seemed to me now that I was in lower depths than I had ever been. Heretofore I had believed circumstances were against me, now I saw that it was Mademoiselle herself. And having found little Rosie, my childhood's playmate and my boyhood's sweetheart, one with Mademoiselle, my manhood's love, had seemed to me a wonderful combination, and now all that was lovely and beautiful in womankind had come to me only to be lost; and lost in dear old Broadfields where every association would have made the finding so much the dearer. I bowed my head on my hands for a few minutes, overwhelmed by this sudden transition from the supreme joy I had felt at meeting her once more, to this dull despair that was settling around my heart with the conviction that she was lost to me.

When I lifted my head I found her watching me solicitously, but that was only her tender heart; I knew it could not bear to see anyone suffer. In answer to a gentle "What is it, Sir Lionel?" I told her a part of what had been passing through my mind — I could not tell her all. Her eyes fell and it almost seemed to me that she grew pale as I talked, but she did not deny that it was true. All that she said was a low shocked —"Sir Lionel!"

At the word the big handsome collie rose from a rug before the fireplace where he had been lying, shook himself and stalked over to his mistress. He was a splendid animal, but he was new at Broadfields. I had never seen him there in the old days. He laid his slender muzzle in Miss Desloge's lap and looked up at her with adoring eyes, and presently, with a dog's instinct that she needed comforting, began to lick her face.

"Down Lion!" she exclaimed hastily, as she put him from her with her little hand. But she had not meant to call his name, and she looked up at me with a startled glance and a quick rush of color to the face I had thought pale a moment before. All my depression and despair were gone in a flash, and such a wave of tenderness swept over me for the little

Rosie of boyhood days as quite blurred, for a moment, the image of Mademoiselle Desloge.

"You named him Lion!" I cried exultingly, seizing her hands in mine, and drawing her toward me. "Oh, Rosie! Rosamond! You love me!"

It was a long time afterward that I asked her again —

"If you loved me, and, as you say, have always loved me, *why* did you run away from New York?"

In broken sentences she answered:

"Oh, I began to be afraid Miss Livingston's scheme had worked too well — that you loved the poor dependent, but perhaps you would not love the mistress of Broadfields. You loved Mademoiselle Desloge, but perhaps you never would love the 'red-headed freckle-faced baby,' Rosie Dufour. And — then — too, I thought that if I went away you would leave New York and come home — Miss Livingston thought so — and your father had written me that he was going to write to you to come."

"My father had written you! And you two were writing to each other and forming conspiracies against me!"

She blushed. "Only that one letter. He said he had written Mr. Livingston and found out who I was, and he hoped I was coming back to Broadfields, and he would write you to come home. But oh, Lionel — you were so long in coming! And now you must go away so soon!"

Her two little hands were clasped on my breast holding me away from her, and her sweet brown eyes, looking up at me, were full of reproach, and almost, I thought it must be tears that made them shine so.

All the lingering love that for years I had unconsciously cherished in the depths of my heart for my little playfellow, Rosie; all the adoring love that for months had held me enslaved in turn, by hope and by despair for Mademoiselle Desloge, Miss Livingston's beautiful companion, downtrodden, persecuted by a tyrannical mistress; all the wonderful love for this glorious Rosamond, mistress of Broadfields, that, for the last hour, had bewildered and intoxicated me, swept over me in an overwhelming flood.

"Rose of the World," I whispered reverently, and hardly dared to kiss away the tears that now were brimming those beautiful eyes, ready to fall.

. . . .

The butler, the same fine old Wellston that had petted and scolded Rosie and me as children, was uttering a warning cough to precede his entrance. Close at his heels were two visitors and they found us each decorously seated on chair and sofa.

It was to me my father made his apology, not to Rosamond.

"You must excuse my coming, Lionel. I couldn't wait to find out what you thought of the mistress of Broadfields."

And as he spoke, he took Rosamond's hand and held it in his.

"Me too, Sir Lionel," said Captain Skinner in his Yankee drawl and with his honest Yankee smile. "I calkelate to go up to Lunnon this arternoon with the caravan of goods from the *Sea Gull,* and I had to see how you took it, fust."

"You too!" I said, as I grasped the captain's sinewy hand. "Now, Rosamond, all we need to make the circle of conspirators complete is to send an invitation to Kemble and the 'adorable Miss Livingston' to come to Clover Combe on their wedding trip."

THE END